

JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE



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New Media and Journalism in the Digital Age

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1.1: New Media and Communication

1.1.1: New Media Technologies

1.1.2: New Media and Society

1.1.3: New Media, the Self, and Relationships

1.2: Media Literacy

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SECTION OVERVIEW

1.1.1: New Media Technologies

1.1.2: New Media and Society

1.1.3: New Media, the Self, and Relationships

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Learning Objectives

1. Trace the evolution of new media.
2. Discuss how new media are more personal and social than old media.

So what makes “new media” *new* media? When we consider “old media,” which consist of mainly print, radio, and television/movies, we see that their presence in our lives and our societies was limited to a few places. For example, television and radio have long been key technology features in the home. Movies were primarily enjoyed in theaters until VCRs and DVD players brought them into our homes. The closest thing to a portable mass medium was reading a book or paper on a commute to and from work. New media, however, are more personal and more social than old media, which creates a paradox we will explore later in this chapter, as we discuss how new media simultaneously separate and connect us. In this section, we will trace the evolution of new media and discuss how personal media and social media fit under the umbrella of new media.

1.1.1.1 The Evolution of New Media

New media, as we are discussing them here, couldn’t exist without the move from analogue to digital technology, as all the types of new media we will discuss are digitally based (Siapera, 2012). Digital media are composed of and/or are designed to read numerical codes (hence the root word *digit*). The most commonly used system of numbers is binary code, which converts information into a series of 0s and 1s. This shared code system means that any machine that can decode (read) binary code can make sense of, store, and replay the information. Analogue media are created by encoding information onto a physical object that must then be paired with another device capable of reading that specific code. So what most distinguishes analogue media from digital media are their physicality and their need to be matched with a specific decoding device. In terms of physicality, analogue media are a combination of mechanical and physical parts, while digital media can be completely electronic and have no physicality; think of an MP3 music file, for example. To understand the second distinction between analogue and digital media, we can look at predigital music and how various types of analogue music had to be paired with a specific decoding device. To make recordings using old media technology, grooves were carved into vinyl to make records or changes were made in the electromagnetic signature of ribbon or tape to make cassette tapes. So each of these physical objects must be paired with a specific device, such as a record player or a cassette deck, to be able to decode and listen to the music. New media changed how we collect and listen to music. Many people who came of age in the digital revolution are now so used to having digital music that the notion of a physical music collection is completely foreign to them. Now music files are stored electronically and can be played on many different platforms, including iPods, computers, and smartphones.



Analogue media like videocassette recorders (VCRs) are only compatible with specific media objects that have been physically encoded with information. Brad Montgomery – [vcr](#) – CC BY 2.0.

In news coverage and academic scholarship, you will see several different terms used when discussing new media. Other terms used include *digital media*, *online media*, *social media*, and *personal media*. For the sake of our discussion, we will subsume all these under the term *new media*. The term *new media* itself has been critiqued by some for setting up a false dichotomy between new and old. The technology that made new media possible has been in development for many years. The Internet has existed in some capacity for more than forty years, and the World Wide Web, which made the Internet accessible to the masses, just celebrated its twenty-first birthday in August of 2012.

So in addition to the word *new* helping us realize some key technological changes from older forms of media, we should also think of *new* as present and future oriented, since media and technology are now changing faster than ever before. In short, what is new today may not be considered new in a week. Despite the rapid changes in technology, the multiplatform compatibility of much of new media paradoxically allows for some stability. Whereas new technology often made analogue media devices and products obsolete, the format of much of the new media objects stays the same even as newer and updated devices with which to access digital media become available. Key to new media is the notion of technological convergence. Most new media are already digital, and the ongoing digitalization of old media allows them to circulate freely and be read/accessed/played by any digital media platform without the need for conversion (Siapera, 2012). This multiplatform compatibility has never existed before, as each type of media had a corresponding platform. For example, you couldn't play records in an eight-track cassette tape player or a VHS tape in a DVD player. Likewise, whereas machines that printed words on paper and the human eye were the encoding and decoding devices needed to engage with analogue forms of print media, you can read this textbook in print, on a computer, or on an e-reader, iPad, smartphone, or other handheld device. Another characteristic of new media is the blurring of lines between producers and consumers, as individual users now have a more personal relationship with their media.

1.1.1.2 Personal Media

Personal media is so named because users are more free to choose the media content to which they want to be exposed, to generate their own content, to comment on and link to other content, to share content with others, and, in general, to create personalized media environments. To better understand personal media, we must take a look at personal media devices and the messages and social connections they facilitate.

In terms of devices, the label *personal media* entered regular usage in the late 1970s when the personal computer was first being produced and plans were in the works to create even more personal (and portable) computing devices (Lüders, 2008). The 1980s saw an explosion of personal media devices such as the Walkman, the VCR, the camcorder, the cell phone, and the personal computer. At this time, though, personal media devices lacked the connectivity that later allowed personal media to become social media. Still, during this time, people created personalized media environments that allowed for more control over the media messages with which they engaged. For example, while portable radios had been around for years, the Walkman allowed people to listen to any cassette tape they owned instead of having to listen to whatever the radio station played. Beyond that, people began creating mix tapes by recording their favorite songs from the radio or by dubbing select songs from other cassette tapes. Although a little more labor intensive, these mix tapes were the precursor to the playlists of digital music that we create today. Additionally, VCRs allowed people to watch specific movies on their own schedule rather than having to watch movies shown on television or at the movie theater.

While mass media messages are the creation of institutions and professionals, many personal media messages are the creation of individuals or small groups whose skills range from amateur to professional (Lüders, 2008). Personal computers allowed amateurs and hobbyists to create new computer programs that they could circulate on discs or perhaps through early Internet connections. Camcorders allowed people to create a range of products from home videos to amateur or independent films. As was mentioned earlier, portable music recording and listening devices also allowed people to create their own mix tapes and gave amateur musicians an affordable and accessible way to make demo tapes. These amateur personal media creations weren't as easily distributed as they are today, as the analogue technology still required that people send their messages on discs or tapes.

Personal media crossed the line to new and social media with the growing accessibility of the Internet and digital media. As media products like videos, music, and pictures turned digital, the analogue personal media devices that people once carried around were no longer necessary. New online platforms gave people the opportunity to create and make content that could be accessed by anyone with an Internet connection. For example, the singer who would have once sold demo tapes on cassettes out of his or her car might be now discovered after putting his or her music on MySpace.

1.1.1.3 Social Media

Media and mass media have long been discussed as a unifying force. The shared experience of national mourning after President Kennedy was assassinated and after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, was facilitated through media. Online media, in particular, is characterized by its connectivity. This type of connectivity is different from that of the mass media. Whereas a large audience was connected to the same radio or television broadcast, newspaper story, book, or movie via a one-way communication channel sent from one place to many, online media connects mass media outlets to people and allows people to connect back to

them. The basis for this connectivity is the Internet, which connects individual computers, smartphones, and other devices in an interactive web, and it is this web of connected personal media devices like computers and smartphones that facilitates and defines social media. Technology has allowed for mediated social interaction since the days of the telegraph, but these connections were not at the mass level they are today. So even if we think of the telegram as a precursor to a “tweet,” we can still see that the potential connection points and the audience size are much different. While a telegraph went to one person, Olympian Michael Phelps can send a tweet instantly to 1.2 million people, and Justin Bieber’s tweets reach 23 million people! Social media doesn’t just allow for connection; it allows us more control over the quality and degree of connection that we maintain with others (Siapera, 2012).

The potential for social media was realized under the conditions of what is called Web 2.0, which refers to a new way of using the connectivity of the Internet to bring people together for collaboration and creativity—to harness collective intelligence (O’Reilly, 2012). This entails using the web to collaborate on projects and problem solving rather than making and protecting one’s own material (Boler, 2008). Much of this was achieved through platforms and websites such as Napster, Flickr, YouTube, and Wikipedia that encouraged and enable user-generated content. It is important to note that user-generated content and collaboration have been a part of the World Wide Web for decades, but much of it was in the form of self-publishing information such as user reviews, online journal entries/diaries, and later blogs, which cross over between the “old” web and Web 2.0.

The most influential part of the new web is social networking sites (SNSs), which allow users to build a public or semipublic profile, create a network of connections to other people, and view other people’s profiles and networks of connections (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Although SNSs have existed for over a decade, earlier iterations such as Friendster and MySpace have given way to the giant that is Facebook. Facebook, which now has more than 955 million monthly active users is unquestionably the most popular SNS.^[1] And the number of users is predicted to reach one billion by the end of 2012 (Hunter, 2012). More specific SNSs like LinkedIn focus on professional networking. In any case, the ability to self-publish information, likes/dislikes, status updates, profiles, and links allows people to craft their own life narrative and share it with other people. Likewise, users can follow the narratives of others in their network as they are constructed. The degree to which we engage with others’ narratives varies based on the closeness of the relationship and situational factors, but SNSs are used to sustain strong, moderate, and weak ties with others (Richardson & Hessey, 2009).

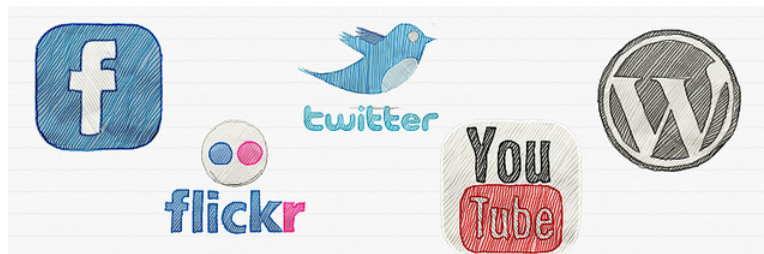


Figure: Social media enable interactivity between individuals that share a social network and also allow people to broadcast or “narrowcast” their activities and interests. Sean MacEntee – [social media](#) – CC BY 2.0.

Let’s conceptualize social media in another way—through the idea of collaboration and sharing rather than just through interpersonal connection and interaction. The growth of open source publishing and creative commons licensing also presents a challenge to traditional media outlets and corporations and copyrights. Open source publishing first appeared most notably with software programs. The idea was that the users could improve on openly available computer programs and codes and then the new versions, sometimes called derivatives, would be made available again to the community. Crowdsourcing refers more to the idea stage of development where people from various perspectives and positions offer proposals or information to solve a problem or create something new (Brabham, 2008). This type of open access and free collaboration helps encourage participation and improve creativity through the synergy created by bringing together different perspectives and has been referred to as the biggest shift in innovation since the Industrial Revolution (Kaufman, 2008). In short, the combination of open source publishing and crowdsourcing allows a community of users to collectively improve on and create more innovative ideas, products, and projects. Unlike most media products that are tightly copyrighted and closely monitored by the companies that create them, open source publishing and crowdsourcing increase the democratizing potential of new media.

The advent of these new, collaborative, participative, and democratizing media has been both resisted and embraced by old media outlets. Increased participation and feedback means that traditional media outlets that were used to one-way communication and passive audiences now have to listen to and respond to feedback, some of which is critical and/or negative. User-generated content, both amateur and professional, can also compete directly with traditional mass media content that costs much more to produce. Social media is responsible for the whole phenomenon of viral videos, through which a video of a kitten doing a flip or a parody of a commercial can reach many more audience members than a network video blooper show or an actual commercial. Media outlets are again in a paradox. They want to encourage audience participation, but they also want to be able to control and predict the media consumption habits and reactions of audiences (Siapera, 2012).

“Getting Real”: The Open Source Philosophy in the Professional World

No matter what career you go into, you will interact with something that is “open source.” It will likely be some type of open source software, since that is the area in which open source product development is most commonly applied (Brabham, 2008). When something is open source, its essential elements are available to anyone who may want to use and/or improve on the product. So, for example, when software is open source, the code is available to anyone who may want to edit it as long as they continue the open philosophy of product development by then making their version, often called a derivative, available to anyone who may want to edit it. Within this philosophy, the synergy that is created when a group of people with different levels of knowledge, experience, and expertise work collaboratively leads to innovative ideas and products that are then shared with the commons rather than kept as proprietary. One example of this type of free, open source software that is used in many professional settings is Mozilla’s Firefox web browser, which I’m sure many of you use.

Another example of open source innovation that we may soon be interacting with frequently in our professional and personal lives is 3D printing. 3D printers are already being used to print custom prosthetics used in knee and hip replacement surgeries, replacement parts for electronic and mechanical devices, custom guitars and shoes, food, and even skin that can be used on humans for skin grafts.^[2] Although the rapid advances in 3D printing have so far been limited to a small group of inventors, specialty scientists, doctors, and early adopters, 3D printers for professional and personal use are now commercially available. The community of people using these printers is committed to keeping them open, which means that when a user designs a program to print a plastic test tube holder that can be put on a standard drill to create a centrifuge, he or she will make that design available for anyone to use and/or modify. This type of do-it-yourself production could have implications for all types of businesses, who could, for example, save money on design, production, and shipping by printing their own custom or specialty products.

1. Discuss some of the advantages and disadvantages of the open source model of product development and innovation.
2. Based on your current career goals, how might open source products (like computer software and 3D printers) play a role in your day-to-day job duties?

1.1.1.4 Key Takeaways

- New media consist mostly of digital media, which are composed of and/or designed to read numerical code (such as binary code).
- New media are distinct from old media in that they are less linked to a specific media platform and are therefore more transferable from device to device. They are also less bound to a physical object, meaning that information can be stored electronically rather than needing to be encoded onto a physical object.
- New media are also distinct from old media in that they are more personal and social. As the line between consumers and producers of media blur in new media, users gain more freedom to personalize their media experiences. Additionally, the interactive web of personal media devices also allows people to stay in touch with each other, collaborate, and share information in ways that increase the social nature of technology use.

1.1.1.5 Exercises

1. Getting integrated: Identify some ways that you might use new media in each of the following contexts: academic, professional, personal, and civic.

2. How do you personalize the media that you use? How do digital media make it easier for you to personalize your media experiences than analogue media?
3. Aside from using social media to maintain interpersonal connections, how have you used social media to collaborate or share information?

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Learning Objectives

1. Discuss the relationship between new media and democracy.
2. Evaluate the ethics of intellectual rights and copyrights in new media.
3. Evaluate the ethics of content filtering and surveillance in new media.

Media studies pioneer Marshall McLuhan emphasized, long before what we now call “new media” existed, that studying media and technology can help us understand our society. In short, he didn’t believe that we could study media without studying society, as the two are bound together (Siapera, 2012). The ongoing switch from analogue to digital, impersonal to personal/social, and one-way to dialogic media is affecting our society in interesting ways.

The days of analogue media are coming to an end and, indeed, are over in many places. As a speech teacher, one of the technology struggles I have faced over the years is recording student speeches. For the past several years, while teaching at different schools, I was continually flustered by the difficulty of finding an easy way to digitally record and have students access their speeches. When I first started teaching, we rolled a camcorder into the classroom on speech days and each student brought his or her own VCR tape to class and would pop it in, hit record, do the speech, and then pop it out. It was the easiest method of recording I have ever used. It didn’t require waiting to upload, having to deal with length or file size issues when trying to post to YouTube or e-mail, or dealing with compatibility issues. But the last time I asked my students to bring a VCR tape was about five years ago, and when I asked, the students looked at me like I had five heads. “Where can we find one of those?” “Where am I going to play it? I don’t have a VCR!” It was at that moment that I knew the analogue era had come to an end, which is evident elsewhere. Now digital television conversion is complete in the United States and the European Union, and many old media formats are being digitalized—for example, books and documents scanned into PDFs, old home movies being turned into DVDs, and record players with USB outputs digitizing people’s vinyl collections.

These technological changes haven’t solved some problems that are being carried over from old media. Some of the same problems with representation and access for which the mass media were criticized are still present in new media, despite its democratizing potential. As we discussed earlier, new media increase participation and interactivity, giving audience members and users more control over content and influence over media decisions. Media critics point out, though, that participants are not equally distributed (Jenkins, 2006). Research shows that new media users, especially heavy users who are more actively engaged, tend to be male, middle class, and white.

1.1.2.1 New Media and Democracy

Scholars and reporters have noted the democratizing effect of new media, meaning that new media help distribute power to the people through their personal and social characteristics. Many media scholars have commented on these changes as a positive and more active and participative alternative to passive media consumption (Siapera, 2012). Instead of the powerful media outlets exclusively having control over what is communicated to audiences and serving as the sole gatekeeper, media-audience interactions are now more like a dialogue. The personal access to media and growing control over media discourses by users allows people to more freely express opinions, offer criticisms, and question others—communicative acts that are all important for a functioning democracy.

A recent national survey found that young people, aged fifteen to twenty-five, are using new media to engage with peers on political issues.^[1] The survey found that young people are defying traditional notions of youthful political apathy by using new media platforms to do things like start online political groups, share political videos using social media, or circulate news stories about political issues.



New media are being used by people, especially young people, to engage with political causes and participate in the democratic process by sharing news stories and “liking” and commenting on other people’s postings. Sean MacEntee – [facebook like button](#) – CC BY 2.0.

These activities were not included in previous research done on the political habits of young people because those surveys typically focused on more traditional forms of political engagement like voting, joining a political party, or offline campaigning. Political engagement using new media is viewed as more participatory, since people can interact with their peers without having to go through official channels or institutions. But the research also found that this type of participatory political engagement also led to traditional engagement, as those people were twice as likely to vote in the actual election.^[2] Although the digital divide is a continuing ethical issue, new media have had a more positive effect on places that are often left out of such technologies. For example, although many people in developing countries still do not have access to dependable electricity or water, they may have access to a cell phone or the Internet through NGO programs or Internet cafés. Many people, especially US Americans, may think the days of Internet cafés (also called cyber cafés) are over. Although Internet cafés were never as popular or numerous in the United States, communal and public Internet access is still an important part of providing access to the Internet all around the world (Liff & Lægran, 2003).

“Getting Plugged In”: Social Media and the 2012 Presidential Election

The election of 2012 has been called the “social media election.” Perhaps in today’s hyperconnected world of social media, we shouldn’t be surprised with the rate at which people took to their Facebook timelines and/or Twitter feeds to announce who they planned on voting for or to encourage others to vote for a particular candidate. In fact, about 25 percent of registered voters told their Facebook friends and Twitter followers who they would vote for (Byers, 2012). Candidates are aware of the growing political power of social media, as evidenced by the fact that, for the first time, major campaigns now include a “digital director” as one of their top-level campaign staffers (Friess, 2012). These “social media gurus” are responsible for securing targeted advertising on outlets such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Pinterest, and Reddit (among others), which now have the capability to narrowcast to specific geographical areas and user demographics. The digital directors are also responsible for developing strategies to secure Facebook “likes,” Twitter followers, and retweets. Smartphones also present new options for targeted messaging, as some ads on mobile apps were “geotargeted” to people riding a certain bus or attending a specific public event (Friess, 2012).

Aside from new methods of advertising, social media also helped capture the much-anticipated Election Day, including some of the barriers or problems people experienced. People used YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook to document and make public their voting experience. One voter in Pennsylvania recorded a video of a voting machine that kept switching to Romney/Ryan every time the person tried to choose Obama/Biden, and before the day was over, the video already had more than two million views (Balke, 2012). People also used social media to document long lines at polling places and to share the incoming election results. The 2012 election was the most-tweeted-about political event ever with approximately 20 million tweets posted on election night and more than 11 million uses of the hashtag “#election2012.” When Obama’s campaign tweeted “Four more years” after he had been declared the winner, it was retweeted more than 225,000 times (Bello, 2012).

1. How did you and/or your friends and family use social media during the 2012 election?
2. What are some of the positives and negatives of the increasingly central role that social media play in politics?

Issues of ownership and control are present in new media as they are in traditional mass media. Although people may think they are multitasking and accessing different media outlets, they may not be. To help keep users within their domain, some large new media platforms like Facebook and Yahoo! create expansive environments that include news, social media connections, advertising, and

entertainment, which allow users to click around and feel like they are moving freely even though they are not leaving the general owner's space.

New media provide ways of countering some of the control and participation issues that audiences have typically faced as the lines blur between producers and consumers of media. The phrase *alternative media* is often associated with new media. Alternative media include a range of voices with diverse cultural identities and experiences, which counter the mainstream media outlets that are controlled by and include the voices and perspectives of more privileged people. Alternative media is very similar to and in fact overlaps with tactical media, which are more activist oriented and include dissenting and "radical" perspectives that challenge the status quo. From a truly democratic perspective, which is supposed to invite and encourage dissent, a plurality of voices, and civil debate, alternative and tactical media are welcome additions to the traditional media landscape that tries to diminish, rather than encourage, competing voices.

Blogs were the earliest manifestation of Web 2.0 and marked the beginning of the turn to more user-generated content and the democratization of information gathering and sharing. While "web logging" existed in various forms before 1999, that year marked blogging's "big bang" as the software application Blogger made it easy for people who did not know HTML (the computer code used to build websites) to compose and publish their blog as well as link to other blogs and relevant content (Boler, 2008). Just as then, today's blogs provide information that varies in terms of depth, quality, and credibility. Blogs that are most relevant to our discussion of democracy are those whose authors engage in citizen journalism and/or gatewatching.

Blogs are an accessible and popular outlet for citizen journalism, which is reporting done by individuals or small groups outside of the media establishment as a corrective to mainstream journalism, which may inaccurately report or underreport a story (Boler, 2008). Citizen journalists increasingly play a part in shaping local and national discussions of news and have received positive and negative evaluations from mainstream media and audiences.

One corrective function of alternative media and citizen journalists is the gatewatching function. Recall that earlier we discussed the gatekeeping function of mass media through which reporters, editors, executives, and advertisers influence what content and how much of it makes it to audiences. Citizen journalists revised this notion to be more actively involved in the process, so gatewatching refers to a media criticism practice that seeks to correct or expand mainstream media reporting. These citizen journalists look for stories or information that will be relevant to their often smaller more niche audiences. Since many people use new media to access information, they seek out information specifically targeted toward their interests and needs. New media make this type of "micro media" a viable alternative to mass media. The citizen journalists then transmit that information to their audience through a blog or microblog, such as Twitter. In this sense, they act as gatewatchers for the mass media and serve the traditional gatekeeper function for their niche audiences. They may comment on how one media outlet covered a story while another did not or how one outlet used more credible sources than the other. They may also critique a media outlet for shallow coverage or overcoverage. Interestingly, the information generated by these citizen journalists increasingly influences the mainstream media's coverage. Stories that may not have been picked up by a major media outlet now get covered after they receive much attention through new and social media. People in such cases may demand that major media outlets cover the story, or the outlet may choose to cover it on their own to capitalize on the popularity of the story.

1.1.2.2 New Media and Ethics

If you buy a song from iTunes, should you be able to play it on any device you wish? Should ideas or knowledge that can lead to positive change for many people (like an approach to international conflict mediation or a scientific discovery that could lead to a new lifesaving medication) be protected and kept from the public through intellectual property laws? How much information and creative works should be available in the public domain to help further knowledge and inspire further innovation and creativity, and how much of that should be protected? These questions aren't easy to answer, and many answers spark controversy as they bring up issues of censorship and information control.



In recent years lawmakers, law enforcers, and media companies have taken more steps to deter and/or prosecute people who violate copyright laws. Cory Doctorow – [Office Depot copyright warning](#) – CC BY-SA 2.0.

Censorship, which is the suppression, limiting, or deleting of speech, is an issue that predates the advent of mass media and new media but one that has become more prevalent as the amount, access to, and diversity of information has increased. Censorship is based on the notion of freedom of speech, which is a foundational principle of the US Constitution and was declared a universal human right by the United Nations (Deibert, 2008). I have chosen to discuss censorship in the section on new media because the Internet, which is the basis for most new media, has been envisioned as an avenue toward and an outlet for more free speech. Censorship is enacted and free speech limited in two primary ways on the Internet: through intellectual property rights and copyrights and through content filtering by governments or other entities (Deibert, 2008).

1.1.2.3 Intellectual Property Rights and Copyrights

As we learned earlier, one of the technological changes that made the birth and explosion of new media possible is the near universal compatibility of digital content. This along with the absence of a physical object onto which media content is coded (a DVD instead of a digital file on a computer or other device) has created issues with increased piracy, which refers to the unlawful reproduction and/or distribution of intellectual property or other copyrighted material (Deibert, 2008). This problem gained much attention following the mass popularity of the peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing program Napster. Despite the numerous lawsuits and legal challenges that Napster faced, P2P file-sharing programs like Limewire, Vuze, and bitTorrent became the new way to legally and illegally share files ranging from software to video games, documents, books, music, and movies.

Once anything is digitized and makes its way to one of these networks, it becomes nearly impossible to control or limit its circulation. For example, media corporations and law enforcement and government agencies have tried to prosecute individuals, require Internet service providers to take action against users who illegally download materials or visit suspect sites, or shut down domain names based in the United States (Newman, 2012). None of these measures has been very effective, especially for sites based outside of the United States, but a renewed effort on the part of interest groups that represent the entertainment industry led to the introduction of two pieces of legislation that stirred up quite a backlash. The Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA) were introduced into the House of Representatives and the Senate in order to make it more difficult for sites, in the United States and abroad, to distribute pirated copyrighted materials ranging from movies, to music, to digital books. Although many people applaud the effort to stop the circulation of pirated material, many were also afraid that the regulations could lead to restrictions on other forms of information circulation such as open source sharing and crowdsourcing (Magid, 2012). To protest and raise awareness of these laws, several high-profile sites and hundreds of other online supporters engaged in the largest act of cyberprotest to date. On January 18, 2012, sites like Wikipedia, Google, and Craigslist “went black,” limited content, or displayed information about SOPA and PIPA. Within a few days, support for the laws had dwindled, and both are now on indefinite hold.

Most new media scholars and commentators do not question the fact that some information should be protected as intellectual property and that many artistic creations should be copyrighted. Such practices help ensure that innovation and creativity are

recognized and that the people who create them are duly compensated. Such protections actually help promote and protect freedom of speech and provide an incentive for people to expend considerable time and effort to produce innovative and creative products and exchange ideas and art that circulate and enhance our society (Deibert, 2008). Intellectual property rights and protections are newer and more difficult to enforce and even define than are copyrights. After all, putting protections on “knowledge” or “information” is more ambiguous than putting a copyright on a discrete item like a book or song. In the realm of academia, especially, the philosophy of open and shared knowledge has been applied to academic research and scholarship. Ideas and findings are free to circulate and be used and adapted (with the proper citation and/or credit given) in order to further knowledge and provide a system of transparency and accountability. Corporations and companies have long had a more closed policy to knowledge and information, keeping many product ideas and designs to themselves and considering them proprietary information. Such practices, including issuing patents for inventions or considering certain information confidential, help keep individuals and businesses striving for better and/or more competitive products or ideas. The increase in corporate-like application of such protections to intellectual property in academia and other scientific areas that were historically more open and collaborative has received much criticism. To reiterate, these issues exist independently of new media, but the fact that most ideas and creations are now in digital form and that the Internet provides for sharing and then rapid and uncontrollable diffusion of such material is what creates the issue relevant to our discussion. And the issue of enforcement is what brings us back to the notion and ethics of censorship.

One way such protections have been enforced is by actually building new codes directly into the content or technology. Again, this alone isn’t enough to constitute an ethical violation. But one media scholar and critic sums up the oppositional view of such practices in the following statement: “Many believe the restrictions are leading to the suffocation of works in the public domain for scholarship and a wholesale erosion of the global commons of information” (Deibert, 2008). The main criticism in terms of infringement on intellectual work rests on the increase in copyrights and intellectual property laws on the circulation of academic findings and publications. The Internet is seen by many as a tool to enhance academic research and sharing and as a place for collaboration, but such laws have limited or shut down some academic databases and the circulation of electronic journals and articles.

The main criticism in terms of infringement on creative works rests on the loss of revenue for artists, authors, and musicians whose works are pirated and losses for their representatives, such as distributors, record labels, or movie studios. Since piracy, which is the illegal or unauthorized reproduction of a copyrighted product, hasn’t been successfully curtailed through threats of prosecution, the codes that I mentioned earlier have become the new means of protection. This practice, called digital rights management (DRM), involves embedding device- or program-specific codes into a digital product that limit its ability to be reproduced and/or used on multiple devices. DRM has raised much concern and controversy. I’m sure we’ve all been frustrated that we can’t get a song we downloaded from iTunes to play on a “nonapproved device” or experienced the annoying unintended effects of DRM. Even though that content belongs to us and we bought it legally, we are not able to take advantage of the portability and cross-platform compatibility that we learned earlier is so characteristic of new media. The use of these codes is critiqued because they limit choice for those who legally and/or rightfully purchased the content and because they lead to a dependency on certain companies (usually large powerful ones) like Microsoft or Apple, which can limit the ability of people, especially those who are already marginalized in terms of socioeconomic status, to access and use certain technology or products.

1.1.2.4 Content Filtering and Surveillance

Research shows that Internet content filtering is increasing as new technologies allow governments and other entities to effectively target and block Internet users from accessing undesirable information. For example, in 2002 only two countries, China and Saudi Arabia, were known to actively filter Internet content within their borders. Presently, many more countries, including the United States, engage in such content filtering. Content filtering can happen at different levels.^[3] Filtering or blocking can happen at the Internet backbone level, which is the method most often used to limit information at the national level. In such cases, content is filtered out at an infrastructure or gateway point before it ever enters the country. Internet service providers can also block or censor content at the request of governments or other groups. Institutions can block certain content using software or other technical means. This type of blocking may be carried out to meet the objectives or values of a particular institution—for example, to block sexually explicit information from school computers. Finally, censorship can occur at the individual computer level. In such cases, parents or others may want to control the information available with filtering software that is customizable.

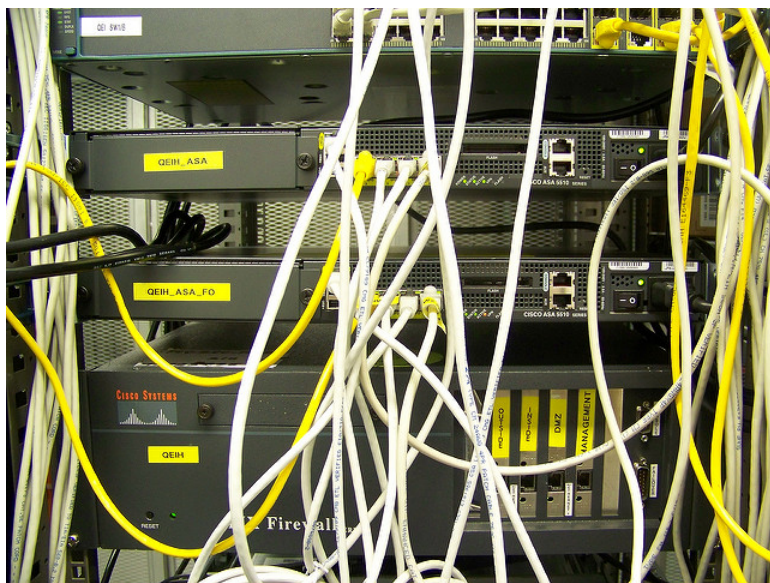


Figure: While it is difficult to control what individuals put on the Internet, governments and other groups have been very effective at blocking certain content at the “backbone” level of the Internet. Stefano Petroni – Firewall – CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Typically, blocked content includes pornography or other materials deemed sexually explicit, information deemed harmful to national security or public safety (e.g., bomb-making information), and information that challenges a government or regime’s power (Deibert, 2008). In 2009, Bahrain was reported to make the most substantial increase in filtering of any country, as it limited many social, religious, political, and human rights sites (Faris & Zittrain, 2009). In terms of politics and human rights blocking, China blocked access to Twitter in the lead-up to the twenty-year anniversary of the Tiananmen Square protests. Saudi Arabia has taken a more targeted approach by blocking the accounts of two prominent human rights activists (Faris & Zittrain, 2009). Religiously offensive material can also be blocked as evidenced by Pakistan’s practice of blocking information that is offensive to Islam. The “Getting Critical” feature explores in more detail the often controversial practice of censorship for religious reasons.

“Getting Critical”: YouTube and Free Speech: Should Religiously Offensive Material Be Blocked?

The issue of censoring information deemed to be religiously offensive gained worldwide attention in September of 2012 when a video trailer for an anti-Islamic movie made in the United States made its way onto YouTube, which sparked protests in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Pakistan, Tunisia, Indonesia, Iraq, Lebanon, and many other countries. In response to calls from some of these countries for the United States to remove the video from YouTube, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton condemned the video but affirmed that the video is protected under the right to free speech promised by the US Constitution. Google, which owns YouTube, also stated that the video doesn’t violate US law or Google’s terms of service and would therefore not be removed in the United States. Google did make the unprecedented decision, in the wake of an attack on the US embassy in Libya that killed four US Americans including ambassador Chris Stevens and in the face of increasing protests, to block the video in Libya, Egypt, Indonesia, and India (Rosen, 2012).

1. Should the United States have completely removed the video from YouTube in the wake of the protests and violence it sparked around the world? Why or why not?
2. Discuss Google/YouTube’s decision to block the video in several countries. Do you think this was the right or wrong decision on the part of the company?
3. Review YouTube’s “Community Guidelines,” which can be accessed at the following link: https://www.youtube.com/t/community_guidelines. In your opinion, should anything be removed from or added to these guidelines?

To further limit information, some governments also block access to foreign news or information from human rights organizations (Faris & Zittrain, 2009). Blocking software can now also limit access to translation sites, which a person could use to get around the filtering since most of the information that is blocked is in the native language(s) of the country. This was the case in Bahrain, which blocked access to Google Translate in 2009. Web access can also be limited due to security reasons. In 2009, the US Marines

announced that soldiers would no longer have access to social media networks, because they can lead to cyberattacks or allow people to leak information. Some of the major critiques of this practice include the collusion of corporations who own certain Internet platforms with governments that block content. For example, a company could turn over, at the request of a government, logs or archives of information about the Internet use of a dissident. At the request of the Chinese government, Yahoo! turned over e-mail records of three people, which led to their arrest. Additionally, people have raised concerns about the fact that US companies supply many of these countries, with whom the United States doesn't have relationship with or with whom those relations are strained, with the software that is then used in ways that go against US and UN policies for the protection of free speech and human rights (Deibert, 2008).

Electronic espionage has been around since communication technologies like the telegraph, sound-recording devices, and radios were invented. Many countries, including the United States, have long had limitations on and protections against the use of electronic surveillance on US citizens, but after 9/11, these restrictions have been lessened, loosely interpreted, or only selectively enforced. With new media come new opportunities for electronic surveillance. Internet based “wiretaps”—the unauthorized and unknown monitoring or collection of e-mail, web-surfing data, or even keyboard strokes—are now employed, and that information may be shared with law enforcement or intelligence agencies (Deibert, 2008).

Such surveillance techniques are not just used by government or intelligence agencies; they are also used by companies. If you're like many others and me, you are now used to clicking “accept” on those lengthy terms of use agreements and privacy policies without looking at them. What we may not know (and may not care about) is that who or whatever is asking us for our agreement or disagreement may want to track our usage of their program or product. Sometimes this tracking is meant to improve the functionality of the product or to connect us with services that we or the program has identified as useful to or relevant for us. The amount of data that exists on each one of us is now astounding, and more web users are demanding that browsers and other Internet services allow them to either opt out of tracking or monitor who is tracking them. A recent “add-on” called Collusion for Mozilla's Firefox has received attention for allowing users to visualize who is tracking them in real time.^[4]

1.1.2.5 Key Takeaways

- New media have had a democratizing effect on society, as they help distribute power to people through their social and personal characteristics. Instead of media outlets having sole control over what is communicated to audiences, media-audience interactions are now more like a dialogue. The personal access to media and growing control over media discourses by users allows people to more freely express opinions, offer criticisms, and question others—communicative acts that are all important for a functioning democracy.
- The digitalization of media products allows them to be more easily reproduced and disseminated. Due to increasing rates of piracy, media outlets have started a more aggressive campaign to reduce copyright infringement through threats of prosecution, collaboration with media providers to identify offending users, and digital rights management (DRM).
- The democratizing nature of new media hasn't been welcomed by all, as governments, institutions, and individuals engage in various types of content filtering.
- The connectivity afforded by social and personal media also create more possibilities for surveillance in terms of electronic “wiretaps” by law enforcement and collection of web-browsing, consumption, and online communication data by corporations and organizations.

1.1.2.6 Exercises

1. Discuss the ways in which new media have democratized access to information and allowed people to participate in more of a dialogue with media outlets, government officials, political candidates, and/or individuals.
2. *Democracy Now* is an alternative media outlet that is accessible in many different new media platforms. You can visit their main page at the following link: <http://www.democracynow.org>. Take a few minutes to visit the website and watch or listen to the most recent broadcast. How does the content of this news differ from mainstream media?
3. Discuss digital rights management (DRM). What are some of the positive and negative effects of limiting the ability of a digital media file to be reproduced or used on multiple devices?

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Learning Objectives

- Discuss the relationship between new media and the self.
- Identify positive and negative impacts of new media on our interpersonal relationships.

Think about some ways that new media have changed the way you think about yourself and the way you think about and interact in your relationships. Have you ever given your Facebook page a “once-over” before you send or accept a friend request just to make sure that the content displayed is giving off the desired impression? The technological changes of the past twenty years have affected you and your relationships whether you are a heavy user or not. Even people who don’t engage with technology as much as others are still affected by it, since the people they interact with use and are affected by new media to varying degrees.

1.1.3.1 New Media and the Self

The explicit way we become conscious of self-presentation when using new media, social networking sites (SNSs) in particular, may lead to an increase in self-consciousness. You’ll recall that in the chapter titled “Introduction to Communication Studies” we talked about the role that communication plays in helping us meet our identity needs and, in the chapter titled “Communication and Perception” on Facebook, the pictures we are tagged in, and the news stories or jokes that we share on our timeline all come together to create a database of information that new and old friends can access to form and reform impressions of us. Because we know that others are making impressions based on this database of information and because we have control over most of what appears in this database, people may become overfocused on crafting their online presence to the point that they neglect their offline relationships. This extra level of self-consciousness has also manifested in an increase in self-image and self-esteem issues for some users. For example, some cosmetic surgeons have noted an uptick in patients coming in to have facial surgeries or procedures specifically because they don’t like the way their chin looks on the webcam while chatting on Skype or because they feel self-conscious about the way they look in the numerous digital pictures that are now passed around and stored on new media. Since new media are being increasingly used in professional capacities, some people are also seeking cosmetic surgery or procedures as a way of investing in their personal brand or as a way of giving them an edge in a tight job market.^[1]

The personal and social nature of new media also creates an openness that isn’t necessarily part of our offline social reality. Although some people try to address this problem by creating more than one Facebook account, according to the terms of use we all agreed to, we are not allowed to create more than one personal profile. People may also have difficulty managing their different commitments, especially if they develop a dependence on or even addiction to new media devices and/or platforms. New media blur the lines between personal and professional in many ways, which can be positive and negative. For example, the constant connection offered by laptops and smartphones increases the expectation that people will continue working from home or while on vacation. At the same time, however, people may use new media for non-work-related purposes while at work, which may help even out the work/life balance. Cyberslacking, which is the non-work-related use of new media while on the job, is seen as a problem in many organizations and workplaces. However, some research shows that occasional use of new media for personal reasons while at work can have positive effects, as it may relieve boredom, help reduce stress, or lead to greater job satisfaction.^[2]

Personal media devices bring with them a sense of constant connectivity that makes us “reachable” nearly all the time and can be comforting or anxiety inducing. Devices such as smartphones and computers, and platforms such as e-mail, Facebook, and the web, are within an arm’s reach of many people. While this can be convenient and make things more efficient in some cases, it can also create a dependence that we might not be aware of until those connections are broken or become unreliable. You don’t have to look too far to see people buried in their smartphones, tablets, or laptops all around. While some people have learned to rely on peripheral vision in order to text and walk at the same time, others aren’t so graceful. In fact, London saw the creation of a “text safe” street with padding on street signs and lamp poles to help prevent injuries when people inevitably bump into them while engrossed in their gadgets’ screens. Follow this link to read a story in Time magazine and see a picture of the street^[3]. Additionally, a survey conducted in the United Kingdom found that being away from social networks causes more anxiety than being a user of them. Another study found that 73 percent of people would panic if they lost their smartphone.^[4]

Of course, social media can also increase self-esteem or have other social benefits. A recent survey of fifteen thousand women found that 48 percent of the respondents felt that social media helped them stay in touch with others while also adding a little stress in terms of overstimulation. Forty-two percent didn’t mention the stress of overstimulation and focused more on the positive effects

of being in touch with others and the world in general. When asked about how social media affects their social lives, 30 percent of the women felt that increased use of social media helped them be more social offline as well.^[5] Other research supports this finding for both genders, finding that Facebook can help people with social anxiety feel more confident and socially connected.^[6]

1.1.3.2 New Media and Interpersonal Relationships

How do new media affect our interpersonal relationships, if at all? This is a question that has been addressed by scholars, commentators, and people in general. To provide some perspective, similar questions and concerns have been raised along with each major change in communication technology. New media, however, have been the primary communication change of the past few generations, which likely accounts for the attention they receive. Some scholars in sociology have decried the negative effects of new technology on society and relationships in particular, saying that the quality of relationships is deteriorating and the strength of connections is weakening.^[7]

Facebook greatly influenced our use of the word friend, although people's conceptions of the word may not have changed as much. When someone "friends you" on Facebook, it doesn't automatically mean that you now have the closeness and intimacy that you have with some offline friends. And research shows that people don't regularly accept friend requests from or send them to people they haven't met, preferring instead to have met a person at least once.^[8] Some users, though, especially adolescents, engage in what is called "friend-collecting behavior," which entails users friending people they don't know personally or that they wouldn't talk to in person in order to increase the size of their online network.^[9] As we will discuss later, this could be an impression management strategy, as the user may assume that a large number of Facebook friends will make him or her appear more popular to others.

Although many have critiqued the watering down of the term friend when applied to SNSs, specifically Facebook, some scholars have explored how the creation of these networks affects our interpersonal relationships and may even restructure how we think about our relationships. Even though a person may have hundreds of Facebook friends that he or she doesn't regularly interact with on- or offline, just knowing that the network exists in a somewhat tangible form (catalogued on Facebook) can be comforting. Even the people who are distant acquaintances but are "friends" on Facebook can serve important functions. Rather than Facebook users seeing these connections as pointless, frivolous, or stressful, they are often comforting background presences. A dormant network is a network of people with whom users may not feel obligated to explicitly interact but may find comfort in knowing the connections exist. Such networks can be beneficial, because when needed, a person may be able to more easily tap into that dormant network than they would an offline extended network. It's almost like being friends on Facebook keeps the communication line open, because both people can view the other's profile and keep up with their lives even without directly communicating. This can help sustain tenuous friendships or past friendships and prevent them from fading away, which as we learned in the chapter titled "Communication in Relationships" is a common occurrence as we go through various life changes.

A key part of interpersonal communication is impression management, and some forms of new media allow us more tools for presenting ourselves than others. Social networking sites (SNSs) in many ways are platforms for self-presentation. Even more than blogs, web pages, and smartphones, the environment on an SNS like Facebook or Twitter facilitates self-disclosure in a directed way and allows others who have access to our profile to see our other "friends." This convergence of different groups of people (close friends, family, acquaintances, friends of friends, colleagues, and strangers) can present challenges for self-presentation. Although Facebook is often thought of as a social media outlet for teens and young adults, research shows half of all US adults have a profile on Facebook or another SNS.^[10] The fact that Facebook is expanding to different generations of users has coined a new phrase—"the graying of Facebook." This is due to a large increase in users over the age of fifty-five. In fact, it has been stated the fastest-growing Facebook user group is women fifty-five and older, which is up more than 175 percent since fall 2008.^[11] So now we likely have people from personal, professional, and academic contexts in our Facebook network, and those people are now more likely than ever to be from multiple generations. The growing diversity of our social media networks creates new challenges as we try to engage in impression management.

We should be aware that people form impressions of us based not just on what we post on our profiles but also on our friends and the content that they post on our profiles. In short, as in our offline lives, we are judged online by the company we keep.^[12] The difference is, though, that via Facebook a person (unless blocked or limited by privacy settings) can see our entire online social network and friends, which doesn't happen offline. The information on our Facebook profiles is also archived, meaning there is a record the likes of which doesn't exist in offline interactions. Recent research found that a person's perception of a profile owner's

attractiveness is influenced by the attractiveness of the friends shown on the profile. In short, a profile owner is judged more physically attractive when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive, and vice versa. The profile owner is also judged as more socially attractive (likable, friendly) when his or her friends are judged as physically attractive. The study also found that complimentary and friendly statements made about profile owners on their wall or on profile comments increased perceptions of the profile owner's social attractiveness and credibility. An interesting, but not surprising, gender double standard also emerged. When statements containing sexual remarks or references to the profile owner's excessive drinking were posted on the profile, perceptions of attractiveness increased if the profile owner was male and decreased if female.^[13]

Self-disclosure is a fundamental building block of interpersonal relationships, and new media make self-disclosures easier for many people because of the lack of immediacy, meaning the fact that a message is sent through electronic means arouses less anxiety or inhibition than would a face-to-face exchange. SNSs provide opportunities for social support. Research has found that Facebook communication behaviors such as “friending” someone or responding to a request posted on someone's wall lead people to feel a sense of attachment and perceive that others are reliable and helpful.^[14] Much of the research on Facebook, though, has focused on the less intimate alliances that we maintain through social media. Since most people maintain offline contact with their close friends and family, Facebook is more of a supplement to interpersonal communication. Since most people's Facebook “friend” networks are composed primarily of people with whom they have less face-to-face contact in their daily lives, Facebook provides an alternative space for interaction that can more easily fit into a person's busy schedule or interest area. For example, to stay connected, both people don't have to look at each other's profiles simultaneously. I often catch up on a friend by scrolling through a couple weeks of timeline posts rather than checking in daily.

The space provided by SNSs can also help reduce some of the stress we feel in regards to relational maintenance or staying in touch by allowing for more convenient contact. The expectations for regular contact with our Facebook friends who are in our extended network are minimal. An occasional comment on a photo or status update or an even easier click on the “like” button can help maintain those relationships. However, when we post something asking for information, help, social support, or advice, those in the extended network may play a more important role and allow us to access resources and viewpoints beyond those in our closer circles. And research shows that many people ask for informational help through their status updates.^[15]

These extended networks serve important purposes, one of which is to provide access to new information and different perspectives than those we may get from close friends and family. For example, since we tend to have significant others that are more similar to than different from us, the people that we are closest to are likely to share many or most of our beliefs, attitudes, and values. Extended contacts, however, may expose us to different political views or new sources of information, which can help broaden our perspectives. The content in this section hopefully captures what I'm sure you have already experienced in your own engagement with new media—that new media have important implications for our interpersonal relationships. Given that, we will end this chapter with a “Getting Competent” feature box that discusses some tips on how to competently use social media.

“Getting Competent”: Using Social Media Competently Objectives

We all have a growing log of personal information stored on the Internet, and some of it is under our control and some of it isn't. We also have increasingly diverse social networks that require us to be cognizant of the information we make available and how we present ourselves. While we can't control all the information about ourselves online or the impressions people form, we can more competently engage with social media so that we are getting the most out of it in both personal and professional contexts.

A quick search on Google for “social media dos and don'ts” will yield around 100,000 results, which shows that there's no shortage of advice about how to competently use social media. I'll offer some of the most important dos and don'ts that I found that relate to communication.^[16] Feel free to do your own research on specific areas of concern.

Be consistent. Given that most people have multiple social media accounts, it's important to have some degree of consistency. At least at the top level of your profile (the part that isn't limited by privacy settings), include information that you don't mind anyone seeing.

Know what's out there. Since the top level of many social media sites are visible in Google search results, you should monitor how these appear to others by regularly (about once a month) doing a Google search using various iterations of your

name. Putting your name in quotation marks will help target your results. Make sure you're logged out of all your accounts and then click on the various results to see what others can see.

Think before you post. Software that enable people to take “screen shots” or download videos and tools that archive web pages can be used without our knowledge to create records of what you post. While it is still a good idea to go through your online content and “clean up” materials that may form unfavorable impressions, it is even a better idea to not put that information out there in the first place. Posting something about how you hate school or your job or a specific person may be done in the heat of the moment and forgotten, but a potential employer might find that information and form a negative impression even if it's months or years old.

Be familiar with privacy settings. If you are trying to expand your social network, it may be counterproductive to put your Facebook or Twitter account on “lockdown,” but it is beneficial to know what levels of control you have and to take advantage of them. For example, I have a “Limited Profile” list on Facebook to which I assign new contacts or people with whom I am not very close. You can also create groups of contacts on various social media sites so that only certain people see certain information.

Be a gatekeeper for your network. Do not accept friend requests or followers that you do not know. Not only could these requests be sent from “bots” that might skim your personal info or monitor your activity; they could be from people that might make you look bad. Remember, we learned earlier that people form impressions based on those with whom we are connected. You can always send a private message to someone asking how he or she knows you or do some research by Googling his or her name or username.

1. Identify information that you might want to limit for each of the following audiences: friends, family, and employers.
2. Google your name (remember to use multiple forms and to put them in quotation marks). Do the same with any usernames that are associated with your name (e.g., you can Google your Twitter handle or an e-mail address). What information came up? Were you surprised by anything?
3. What strategies can you use to help manage the impressions you form on social media?

1.1.3.3 Key Takeaways

New media affect the self as we develop a higher degree of self-consciousness due to the increased visibility of our lives (including pictures, life events, and communication). The constant connectivity that comes with new media can also help us feel more connected to others and create anxiety due to overstimulation or a fear of being cut off.

New media affect interpersonal relationships, as conceptions of relationships are influenced by new points of connection such as “being Facebook friends.” While some people have critiqued social media for lessening the importance of face-to-face interaction, some communication scholars have found that online networks provide important opportunities to stay connected, receive emotional support, and broaden our perspectives in ways that traditional offline networks do not.

Getting integrated: Social networking sites (SNSs) can present interpersonal challenges related to self-disclosure and self-presentation since we use them in academic, professional, personal, and civic contexts. Given that people from all those contexts may have access to our profile, we have to be competent in regards to what we disclose and how we present ourselves to people from different contexts (or be really good at managing privacy settings so that only certain information is available to certain people).

1.1.3.4 Exercises

Discuss the notion that social media has increased our degree of self-consciousness. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Do you find the constant connectivity that comes with personal media overstimulating or comforting?

Have you noticed a “graying” of social media like Facebook and Twitter in your own networks? What opportunities and challenges are presented by intergenerational interactions on social media?

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Learning Objectives

- Define media literacy, and explain why it is relevant to today's world.
- Discuss the role of individual responsibility and accountability when responding to pop culture.
- List the five key questions that can be asked about any media message.

In Gutenberg's age and the subsequent modern era, literacy—the ability to read and write—was a concern not only of educators but also of politicians, social reformers, and philosophers. A literate population, many reasoned, would be able to seek out information, stay informed about the news of the day, communicate with others, and make informed decisions in many spheres of life. Because of this, the reasoning went, literate people made better citizens, parents, and workers. In the 20th century, as literacy rates grew around the globe, there was a new sense that merely being able to read and write was not enough. In a world dominated by media, individuals needed to be able to understand, sort through and analyze the information they were bombarded with every day. In the second half of the 20th century, a name was finally put to this skill of being able to decode and process the messages and symbols transmitted via media: media literacy. According to the nonprofit National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), a person who is media literate is able to access, analyze, evaluate, and communicate information. Put another way by John Culkin, a pioneering advocate for media literacy education, “the new mass media—film, radio, TV—are new languages, their grammar as yet unknown.” Kate Moody, “John Culkin, SJ: The Man Who Invented Media Literacy: 1928–1993,” Center for Media Literacy, www.medialit.org/reading_room/article408.html (accessed July 15, 2010). Media literacy seeks to give media consumers the ability to understand this new language.

1.2.1 Why Be Media Literate?

Culkin called the pervasiveness of media “the unnoticed fact of our present,” noting that media information was as omnipresent and easy to overlook as the air we breathe (and, he noted, “some would add that it is just as polluted”). Our exposure to media starts early—a study by the Kaiser Family Foundation found that 68 percent of children aged two and younger spend an average of two hours in front of a screen (either computer or television) each day, while children under six spend as much time in front of a screen as they do playing outside. As previously noted, U.S. teenagers are spending an average of 7.5 hours with media daily, nearly as long as they spend in school. Media literacy isn't merely a skill for young people, however. Today, Americans of all ages get much of their information from various media sources. One crucial role of media literacy education is to enable all of us to skeptically examine the often-conflicting media messages we receive every day.

1.2.2 Advertising

Many of the hours people spend with media are with commercial-sponsored content. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) estimated that children aged 2 to 11 saw, on average, 25,629 television commercials a year, or more than 10,700 minutes of ads. Adults saw 52,469 ads, or about 15.5 days worth of television advertising. Debra Holt, Pauline Ippolito, Debra Desrochers, and Christopher Kelley, “Children's Exposure to TV Advertising in 1977 and 2004,” Federal Trade Commission Bureau of Economics Staff Report, June 1, 2007. Children (and adults) are bombarded with contradictory messages—newspaper articles about the obesity epidemic are side by side with ads touting soda, candy, and fast food. The American Academy of Pediatrics maintains that advertising directed at children under eight is “inherently deceptive” and exploitative because young children cannot tell the difference between programs and commercials. Donald Shifrin, “Perspectives on Marketing, Self-Regulation and Childhood Obesity,” Remarks given at Federal Trade Commission Workshop July 14–15, 2005, Washington, DC.

Advertising raises other issues as well. It often uses techniques of psychological pressure to influence decision making. Ads might appeal to vanity, insecurity, prejudice, fear, or the desire for adventure. This is not always a negative thing—antismoking public service announcements may rely on disgusting images of blackened lungs to shock viewers. Nonetheless, media literacy attempts to teach people to be informed and guarded consumers, and to evaluate claims with a critical eye. Do “four out of five doctors” really endorse the product?

1.2.3 Bias, Spin, and Misinformation

Advertisements may have the explicit goal of selling a product or idea, but they're not the only kind of media message with an agenda. A politician may hope to persuade potential voters that she has their best interests at heart. An ostensibly objective journalist may allow his or her own political leanings to subtly slant articles. Magazine writers might avoid criticizing companies that advertise heavily in their pages. Broadcast news reporters may sensationalize stories in order to boost ratings—and advertising rates.

An important part of media literacy is remembering that mass communication messages are created by individuals, each with a set of values, assumptions, and priorities. Accepting media messages at face value could lead to head-spinning confusion, thanks to all the contradictory information that's out there. For example, in 2010, a highly contested governor's race in New Mexico led to conflicting ads from both candidates, Diane Denish and Susana Martinez. Each claimed that the other agreed to policies that benefited sex offenders. According to the media watchdog site Factcheck.org, the Denish team's ad "shows a pre-teen girl—seemingly about 9 years old—going down a playground slide in slow-motion, while ominous music plays in the background and an announcer discusses two sex crime cases. It ends with an empty swing, as the announcer says: 'Today we don't know where these sex offenders are lurking, because Susana Martinez didn't do her job.'" The opposing ad proclaims that "a department in Denish's cabinet gave sanctuary to criminal illegals [sic], like child molester Juan Gonzalez." Both claims are highly inflammatory, play on fear, and distort the reality behind each situation. Media literacy attempts to give people the skills to look critically at these and other media messages—to sift through various claims, and to make sense of the often-conflicting information we face every day.

The Center for Media Literacy's Five Core Concepts

1. All media messages are constructed.
2. Media messages are constructed using a creative language with its own rules.
3. Different people experience the same media message differently.
4. Media have embedded values and points of view.
5. Most media messages are organized to gain profit and/or power.<http://www.medialit.org>

1.2.4 New Skills for a New World

In the past, one goal of education was to provide students with the information deemed necessary to successfully engage with the world. Students memorized multiplication tables, state capitals, famous poems, and notable dates. In today's world, however, vast amounts of information are available at the click of a mouse. Even before the advent of the Internet, noted communications scholar David Berlo foresaw the consequences of expanding information technology: "Most of what we have called formal education has been intended to imprint on the human mind all of the information that we might need for a lifetime." Changes in technology necessitate changes in how we learn, Berlo noted, and these days "education needs to be geared toward the handling of data rather than the accumulation of data." David Shaw, "A Plea for Media Literacy in our Nation's Schools," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 2003.

Online technology surely has changed how we learn. For example, Wikipedia, a hugely popular Internet encyclopedia, is at the center of a debate on the proper use of online sources. In 2007, Middlebury College banned the use of Wikipedia as a source in history papers and exams. One of the school's librarians noted that the online encyclopedia "symbolizes the best and worst of the Internet. It's the best because everyone gets his/her say and can state their views. It's the worst because people who use it uncritically take for truth what is only opinion." Meredith Byers, "Controversy over use of Wikipedia in academic papers arrives at Smith," *Smith College Sophian*, News section, March 8, 2007. Or as comedian and satirist Stephen Colbert put it, "any user can change any entry, and if enough other users agree with them, it becomes true." In 2007, CIA computers were used to make edits on the site's article about the President of Iran. The Vatican allegedly doctored the entry for Irish activist and Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams. A computer registered to the U.S. Democratic Party changed the site's page for Rush Limbaugh to proclaim that he was "racist" and a "bigot." Jonathan Fildes, "Wikipedia 'shows CIA page edits.'" *BBC News*, Science and Technology section, August 15, 2007. Media literacy teaches today's students how to sort through the Internet's cloud of data, ferret out reliable sources, and be aware of bias and unreliable sources.

1.2.5 Individual Accountability and Popular Culture

Ultimately, media literacy teaches that messages and images are constructed with various aims in mind and that each individual has the responsibility to evaluate and interpret these media messages. Mass communication may be created and disseminated by individuals, businesses, governments, or organizations, but they are always received by an individual, even if that individual is sitting in a crowded theater. Education, life experience, and a host of other factors allow each person to interpret constructed media in different ways; there is no “right answer,” or one way to read the media. But media literacy skills help us to function better in our media-rich environment, enabling us to be better democratic citizens, smarter shoppers, and more skeptical media consumers. As a means to this end, NAMLE has come up with a list of five questions to ask when analyzing media messages:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently?
4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
5. Why is this message being sent? Center for Media Literacy, MediaLitKit, www.medialit.org/pdf/mlk/14A_CCKQposter.pdf (accessed July 15, 2010).

With these questions as a starting point, we can ensure that we’re staying informed about where our information comes from, and why—important steps in any media literacy education.

- Media literacy, or the ability to decode and process media messages, is especially key in today’s media-saturated society. Media surrounds contemporary Americans to an unprecedented degree, and from an early age. Because media messages are constructed with particular aims in mind, a media literate individual will interpret them with a critical eye. Advertisements, bias, spin, and misinformation are all things to look out for.
- Individual responsibility is crucial for media literacy because, while media messages may be produced by individuals, companies, governments, or organizations, they are always received and decoded by individuals.
- The following are NAMLE’s five questions that can be asked about any media message:
 1. Who created this message?
 2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
 3. How might different people understand this message differently?
 4. What values, lifestyles, and points of view are represented in, or omitted from, this message?
 5. Why is this message being sent?

? Exercise 1.2.1

Find a media message of any kind and apply NAMLE’s five questions to it. Did your impression change? How does this piece of mass communication attempt to get its message across? Do you think it’s successful? Why or why not?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 1.1
 1. What is the difference between mass communication and mass media?
 2. What are some ways that culture affects media?
 3. What are some ways that media affect culture?
2. Questions for Section 1.2
 1. List four roles that media plays in society.
 2. Identify historical events that shaped the adoption of various mass communication platforms.
 3. How have technological shifts impacted the media industry over time?
3. Questions for Section 1.3

1. What is a cultural period?
2. How did events, technological advances, political changes, and philosophies help shape the modern era?
3. What are some of the major differences between the modern and postmodern eras?
4. Questions for Section 1.4
 1. What is convergence, and what are some examples of it in daily life?
 2. What were the five types of convergence identified by Jenkins?
 3. How are different kinds of convergence shaping the digital age, on both an individual and a social level?
5. Questions for Section 1.5
 1. How does the value of free speech influence American culture and media?
 2. What are some of the limits placed on free speech, and how do they reflect social values?
 3. What is propaganda, and how does it reflect or influence social values?
 4. Who are gatekeepers, and how do they influence the media landscape?
6. Questions for Section 1.6
 1. What is popular culture and how does it differ from traditional notions of culture?
 2. Who are tastemakers and what are some key examples?
 3. How have tastemakers changed with changes in technology?
7. Questions for Section 1.7
 1. What is media literacy, and why is it relevant in today's world?
 2. What is the role of the individual in interpreting media messages?
 3. What are the five questions that NAMLE suggests should be asked of any media message?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. What does the history of media technologies have to teach us about present-day America? How might current and emerging technologies change our cultural landscape in the near future?
2. Are gatekeepers and tastemakers necessary for mass media? How is the Internet helping us to re-imagine these roles?
3. The idea of cultural periods presumes that changes in society and technology lead to dramatic shifts in the way people see the world. How has the Internet and digital technology changed how people interact with their environment, and with each other? Are we changing to a new cultural period, or is contemporary life still a continuation of the postmodern era?
4. U.S. law regulates free speech through laws on obscenity, copyright infringement, and other things. Why are some forms of expression protected and others aren't? How do you think cultural values will change U.S. media law in the near future?
5. Does media literacy education belong in American schools? Why or why not? What might a media literacy curriculum look like?

📌 Career Connection

In a heavily mediated world, almost every organization, from a university to a multinational corporation, employs media specialists. Many organizations also use consultants to help analyze and manage the interaction between their organizations and the media. Independent consultants develop projects, keep abreast of media trends, and provide advice based on industry reports. Or, as writer, speaker, and media consultant Merlin Mann puts it, the “primary job is to stay curious about everything, identify the points where two forces might clash, then enthusiastically share what that might mean, as well as why you might care.”

Read the blog post “So what do consultants do?” at <http://www.consulting-business.com/so-what-do-consultants-do.html>.

Now explore the site of Merlin Mann at <http://www.merlinmann.com>. Make sure to take a look at the “Bio” and “FAQs” sections. These two pages will help you answer the following questions:

1. Merlin Mann provides some work for free and charges a significant amount for other projects. What are some of the indications he gives in his biography about what he values? How do you think his values influence his fees?

2. Check out Merlin's "Projects." What are some of the projects that Merlin is or has been involved with? Now look at the "Speaking" page. Can you see a link between his projects and his role as a prominent writer, speaker, and consultant?
3. Check out Merlin's FAQ section. What is his attitude about social networking sites? What about public relations? Why do you think he holds these opinions?
4. Think about niches in the Internet industry where a consultant might be helpful. Do you have expertise, theories, or reasonable advice that might make you a useful asset for a business or organization? Find an example of an organization or group with some media presence. If you were this group's consultant, how would you recommend that they better reach their goals?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

- 2.1: What is the Media?
- 2.2: Political Economies
- 2.3: A History of Modern Political Economy
- 2.4: The Audience Commodity
- 2.5: The Propaganda Model
- 2.6: Political Economies of Digital media

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2.1.1 Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Explain what the media are and how they are organized
- Describe the main functions of the media in a free society
- Compare different media formats and their respective audiences

Ours is an exploding media system. What started as print journalism was subsequently supplemented by radio coverage, then network television, followed by cable television. Now, with the addition of the Internet, blogs and social media—a set of applications or web platforms that allow users to immediately communicate with one another—give citizens a wide variety of sources for instant news of all kinds. The Internet also allows citizens to initiate public discussion by uploading images and video for viewing, such as videos documenting interactions between citizens and the police, for example. Provided we are connected digitally, we have a bewildering amount of choices for finding information about the world. In fact, some might say that compared to the tranquil days of the 1970s, when we might read the morning newspaper over breakfast and take in the network news at night, there are now too many choices in today's increasingly complex world of information. This reality may make the news media all the more important to structuring and shaping narratives about U.S. politics. Or the proliferation of competing information sources like blogs and social media may actually weaken the power of the news media relative to the days when news media monopolized our attention.

2.1.2 MEDIA BASICS

The term *media* defines a number of different communication formats from television media, which share information through broadcast airwaves, to print media, which rely on printed documents. The collection of all forms of media that communicate information to the general public is called mass media, including television, print, radio, and Internet. One of the primary reasons citizens turn to the media is for news. We expect the media to cover important political and social events and information in a concise and neutral manner.

To accomplish its work, the media employs a number of people in varied positions. Journalists and reporters are responsible for uncovering news stories by keeping an eye on areas of public interest, like politics, business, and sports. Once a journalist has a lead or a possible idea for a story, he or she researches background information and interviews people to create a complete and balanced account. Editors work in the background of the newsroom, assigning stories, approving articles or packages, and editing content for accuracy and clarity. Publishers are people or companies that own and produce print or digital media. They oversee both the content and finances of the publication, ensuring the organization turns a profit and creates a high-quality product to distribute to consumers. Producers oversee the production and finances of visual media, like television, radio, and film.

The work of the news media differs from public relations, which is communication carried out to improve the image of companies, organizations, or candidates for office. Public relations is not a neutral information form. While journalists write stories to inform the public, a public relations spokesperson is paid to help an individual or organization get positive press. Public relations materials normally appear as press releases or paid advertisements in newspapers and other media outlets. Some less reputable publications, however, publish paid articles under the news banner, blurring the line between journalism and public relations.

2.1.3 MEDIA TYPES

Each form of media has its own complexities and is used by different demographics. Millennials (currently aged 18–33) are more likely to get news and information from social media, such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook, while baby boomers (currently aged 50–68) are most likely to get their news from television, either national broadcasts or local news (Figure).

 A graph titled “where do you get your news?”. The legend indicates three categories: “Baby Boomer”, “Generation X”, and “Millennial”. The x-axis of the graph is labeled “Percentage of demographic group getting news from source” and goes from 0% at the origin to 70%. The y-axis of the graph is labeled “News Source” and lists several sources. For “Youtube”, approximately 22% is shown for Millennials, approximately 11% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 10% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “Wall Street Journal”, approximately 9% is shown for Millennials, approximately 9% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 12% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “Twitter”, approximately 13% is shown for Millennials, approximately 9% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 5% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “Rush Limbaugh”, approximately 3% is shown for Millennials, approximately 7% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 12% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “NPR”, approximately 18% is shown for Millennials, approximately 21% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 22% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “FOX”, approximately 30% is shown for Millennials, approximately 36% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 47% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “Facebook”, approximately 61% is shown for Millennials, approximately 51% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 39% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “CNN”, approximately 44% is shown for Millennials, approximately 45% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 43% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “CBS”, approximately 19% is shown for Millennials, approximately 27% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 39% is shown for Baby Boomers. For “BBC”, approximately 16% is shown for Millennials, approximately 16% is shown for Generation X, and approximately 18% is shown for Baby Boomers. At the bottom of the graph, a source is cited: “Pew Research Center. “American Trends Panel (wave 1).” April 29, 2014.”.

Age greatly influences the choice of news sources. Baby boomers are more likely to get news and information from television, while members of generation X and millennials are more likely to use social media.

Television alone offers viewers a variety of formats. Programming may be scripted, like dramas or comedies. It may be unscripted, like game shows or reality programs, or informative, such as news programming. Although most programs are created by a television production company, national networks—like CBS or NBC—purchase the rights to programs they distribute to local stations across the United States. Most local stations are affiliated with a national network corporation, and they broadcast national network programming to their local viewers.

Before the existence of cable and fiber optics, networks needed to own local affiliates to have access to the local station’s transmission towers. Towers have a limited radius, so each network needed an affiliate in each major city to reach viewers. While cable technology has lessened networks’ dependence on aerial signals, some viewers still use antennas and receivers to view programming broadcast from local towers.

Affiliates, by agreement with the networks, give priority to network news and other programming chosen by the affiliate’s national media corporation. Local affiliate stations are told when to air programs or commercials, and they diverge only to inform the public about a local or national emergency. For example, ABC affiliates broadcast the popular television show *Once Upon a Time* at a specific time on a specific day. Should a fire threaten homes and businesses in a local area, the affiliate might preempt it to update citizens on the fire’s dangers and return to regularly scheduled programming after the danger has ended.

Most affiliate stations will show local news before and after network programming to inform local viewers of events and issues. Network news has a national focus on politics, international events, the economy, and more. Local news, on the other hand, is likely to focus on matters close to home, such as regional business, crime, sports, and weather.

Jeremy Lipschultz and Michael Hilt. 2003. “Race and Local Television News Crime Coverage,” *Studies in Media & Information Literacy Education* 3, No. 4: 1–10.

The *NBC Nightly News*, for example, covers presidential campaigns and the White House or skirmishes between North Korea and South Korea, while the NBC affiliate in Los Angeles (KNBC-TV) and the NBC affiliate in Dallas (KXAS-TV) report on the governor’s activities or weekend festivals in the region.

Cable programming offers national networks a second method to directly reach local viewers. As the name implies, cable stations transmit programming directly to a local cable company hub, which then sends the signals to homes through coaxial or fiber optic cables. Because cable does not broadcast programming through the airwaves, cable networks can operate across the nation directly without local affiliates. Instead they purchase broadcasting rights for the cable stations they believe their viewers want. For this reason, cable networks often specialize in different types of programming.

The Cable News Network (CNN) was the first news station to take advantage of this specialized format, creating a 24-hour news station with live coverage and interview programs. Other news stations quickly followed, such as MSNBC and FOX News. A viewer might tune in to Nickelodeon and catch family programs and movies or watch ESPN to catch up with the latest baseball or basketball scores. The Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network, known better as C-SPAN, now has three channels covering Congress, the president, the courts, and matters of public interest.

Cable and satellite providers also offer on-demand programming for most stations. Citizens can purchase cable, satellite, and Internet subscription services (like Netflix) to find programs to watch instantly, without being tied to a schedule. Initially, on-demand programming was limited to rebroadcasting old content and was commercial-free. Yet many networks and programs now allow their new programming to be aired within a day or two of its initial broadcast. In return they often add commercials the user cannot fast-forward or avoid. Thus networks expect advertising revenues to increase.

Lucas Shaw, “TV Networks Offering More On Demand to Reduce Ad-Skipping,” *Bloomberg Technology*, 24 September 2014.

The on-demand nature of the Internet has created many opportunities for news outlets. While early media providers were those who could pay the high cost of printing or broadcasting, modern media require just a URL and ample server space. The ease of online publication has made it possible for more niche media outlets to form. The websites of the *New York Times* and other newspapers often focus on matters affecting the United States, while channels like BBC America present world news. FOX News presents political commentary and news in a conservative vein, while the Internet site Daily Kos offers a liberal perspective on the news. Politico.com is perhaps the leader in niche journalism.

Unfortunately, the proliferation of online news has also increased the amount of poorly written material with little editorial oversight, and readers must be cautious when reading Internet news sources. Sites like BuzzFeed allow members to post articles without review by an editorial board, leading to articles of varied quality and accuracy. The Internet has also made publication speed a consideration for professional journalists. No news outlet wants to be the last to break a story, and the rush to publication often leads to typographical and factual errors. Even large news outlets, like the Associated Press, have published articles with errors in their haste to get a story out.

The Internet also facilitates the flow of information through social media, which allows users to instantly communicate with one another and share with audiences that can grow exponentially. Facebook and Twitter have millions of daily users. Social media changes more rapidly than the other media formats. While people in many different age groups use sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, other sites like Snapchat and Yik Yak appeal mostly to younger users. The platforms also serve different functions. Tumblr and Reddit facilitate discussion that is topic-based and controversial, while Instagram is mostly social. A growing number of these sites also allow users to comment anonymously, leading to increases in threats and abuse. The site 4chan, for example, was linked to the 2015 shooting at an Oregon community college.

Daniel Marans, “Did the Oregon Shooter Warn of His Plans on 4chan?” *Huffington Post*, 1 October 2015.

Regardless of where we get our information, the various media avenues available today, versus years ago, make it much easier for everyone to be engaged. The question is: Who controls the media we rely on? Most media are controlled by a limited number of conglomerates. A conglomerate is a corporation made up of a number of companies, organizations, and media networks. In the 1980s, more than fifty companies owned the majority of television and radio stations and networks. Now, only six conglomerates control most of the broadcast media in the United States: CBS Corporation, Comcast, Time Warner, 21st Century Fox (formerly News Corporation), Viacom, and The Walt Disney Company (Figure).

Vanna Le, “Global 2000: The World’s Largest Media Companies of 2014,” *Forbes*, 7 May 2014.

The Walt Disney Company, for example, owns the ABC Television Network, ESPN, A&E, and Lifetime, in addition to the Disney Channel. Viacom owns BET, Comedy Central, MTV, Nickelodeon, and VH1. Time Warner owns Cartoon Network, CNN, HBO, and TNT, among others. While each of these networks has its own programming, in the end, the conglomerate can make a policy that affects all stations and programming under its control.

 A chart that demonstrates the decline in number of media companies within the U.S. On the left, there are 50 small TVs in a 10 by 5 table, labeled “1983: 90% of media, 50 companies”. On the right are six large screen TVs labeled “CBS”, “Comcast”, “Disney”, “21st Century Fox”, “Time Warner”, and “Viacom”. A label reads “2012: 90% of media, 6 companies”.

In 1983, fifty companies owned 90 percent of U.S. media. By 2012, just six conglomerates controlled the same percentage of U.S. media outlets.

Conglomerates can create a monopoly on information by controlling a sector of a market. When a media conglomerate has policies or restrictions, they will apply to all stations or outlets under its ownership, potentially limiting the information citizens receive. Conglomerate ownership also creates circumstances in which censorship may occur. iHeartMedia (formerly Clear Channel Media) owns music, radio, and billboards throughout the United States, and in 2010, the company refused to run several billboard ads for the St. Pete Pride Festival and Promenade in St. Petersburg, Florida. The festival organizers said the content of two ads, a picture of same-sex couples in close contact with one another, was the reason the ads were not run. Because iHeartMedia owns most of the billboards in the area, this limitation was problematic for the festival and decreased awareness of the event. Those in charge of the festival viewed the refusal as censorship.

Stephanie Hayes, “Clear Channel Rejects St. Pete Pride Billboards, Organizers Say,” *Tampa Bay Times*, 11 June 2010.

Newspapers too have experienced the pattern of concentrated ownership. Gannett Company, while also owning television media, holds a large number of newspapers and news magazines in its control. Many of these were acquired quietly, without public notice or discussion. Gannett's 2013 acquisition of publishing giant A.H. Belo Corporation caused some concern and news coverage, however. The sale would have allowed Gannett to own both an NBC and a CBS affiliate in St. Louis, Missouri, giving it control over programming and advertising rates for two competing stations. The U.S. Department of Justice required Gannett to sell the station owned by Belo to ensure market competition and multi-ownership in St. Louis.

Meg James, "DOJ Clears Gannett-Belo Deal but Demands Sale of St. Louis TV Station," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 December 2013.

If you are concerned about the lack of variety in the media and the market dominance of media conglomerates, the non-profit organization, Free Press, tracks and promotes open communication.

These changes in the format and ownership of media raise the question whether the media still operate as an independent source of information. Is it possible that corporations and CEOs now control the information flow, making profit more important than the impartial delivery of information? The reality is that media outlets, whether newspaper, television, radio, or Internet, are businesses. They have expenses and must raise revenues. Yet at the same time, we expect the media to entertain, inform, and alert us without bias. They must provide some public services, while following laws and regulations. Reconciling these goals may not always be possible.

2.1.4 FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA

The media exist to fill a number of functions. Whether the medium is a newspaper, a radio, or a television newscast, a corporation behind the scenes must bring in revenue and pay for the cost of the product. Revenue comes from advertising and sponsors, like McDonald's, Ford Motor Company, and other large corporations. But corporations will not pay for advertising if there are no viewers or readers. So all programs and publications need to entertain, inform, or interest the public and maintain a steady stream of consumers. In the end, what attracts viewers and advertisers is what survives.

The media are also watchdogs of society and of public officials. Some refer to the media as the *fourth estate*, with the branches of government being the first three estates and the media equally participating as the fourth. This role helps maintain democracy and keeps the government accountable for its actions, even if a branch of the government is reluctant to open itself to public scrutiny. As much as social scientists would like citizens to be informed and involved in politics and events, the reality is that we are not. So the media, especially journalists, keep an eye on what is happening and sounds an alarm when the public needs to pay attention.

John Zaller. 2003. "A New Standard of News Quality: Burglar Alarms for the Monitorial Citizen," *Political Communication* 20, No. 2: 109–130.

The media also engages in agenda setting, which is the act of choosing which issues or topics deserve public discussion. For example, in the early 1980s, famine in Ethiopia drew worldwide attention, which resulted in increased charitable giving to the country. Yet the famine had been going on for a long time before it was discovered by western media. Even after the discovery, it took video footage to gain the attention of the British and U.S. populations and start the aid flowing.

Suzanne Ranks, "Ethiopian Famine: How Landmark BBC Report Influenced Modern Coverage," *Guardian*, 22 October 2014.

Today, numerous examples of agenda setting show how important the media are when trying to prevent further emergencies or humanitarian crises. In the spring of 2015, when the Dominican Republic was preparing to exile Haitians and undocumented (or under documented) residents, major U.S. news outlets remained silent. However, once the story had been covered several times by Al Jazeera, a state-funded broadcast company based in Qatar, ABC, the *New York Times*, and other network outlets followed.

Hisham Aidi, "Haitians in the Dominican Republic in Legal Limbo," *Al Jazeera*, 10 April 2015.

With major network coverage came public pressure for the U.S. government to act on behalf of the Haitians.

"Pressure the Government of the Dominican Republic to Stop its Planned 'Cleaning' of 250,000 Black Dominicans," petitions.whitehouse.gov/petition/ack-dominicans (November 26, 2015); Led Black, "Prevent Humanitarian Tragedy in Dominican Republic," *CNN*, 23 June 2015.

CHRISTIANE AMANPOUR ON "WHAT SHOULD BE NEWS?"

The media are our connection to the world. Some events are too big to ignore, yet other events, such as the destruction of Middle Eastern monuments or the plight of foreign refugees, are far enough from our shores that they often go unnoticed. What we see is carefully selected, but who decides what should be news?

As the chief international correspondent for CNN, Christiane Amanpour is one media decision maker (Figure). Over the years, Amanpour has covered events around the world from war to genocide. In an interview with Oprah Winfrey, Amanpour explains that her duty, and that of other journalists, is to make a difference in the world. To do that, “we have to educate people and use the media responsibly.”

“Oprah Talks to Christiane Amanpour,” *O, Oprah Magazine*, September 2005. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations in this feature box are from this article.

Journalists cannot passively sit by and wait for stories to find them. “Words have consequences: the stories we decide to do, the stories we decide not to do . . . it all matters.”

“How Christiane Amanpour Stumbled Into a Career in TV News,” *TVNewser*, 10 February 2016.

An image of Christiane Amanpour.

Christiane Amanpour accepts the award for the Association for International Broadcasting’s Personality of the Year on November 4, 2015. (credit: AIB (Association for International Broadcasting))

As Amanpour points out, journalists are often “on the cutting edge of reform,” so if they fail to shed light on events, the results can be tragic. One of her biggest regrets was not covering the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, which cost nearly a million lives. She said the media ignored the event in favor of covering democratic elections in South Africa and a war in Bosnia, and ultimately she believes the media failed the people. “If we don’t respect our profession and we see it frittering away into the realm of triviality and sensationalism, we’ll lose our standing,” she said. “That won’t be good for democracy. A thriving society must have a thriving press.”

This feeling of responsibility extends to covering moral topics, like genocide. Amanpour feels there shouldn’t be equal time given to all sides. “I’m not just a stenographer or someone with a megaphone; when I report, I have to do it in context, to be aware of the moral conundrum. . . . I have to be able to draw a line between victim and aggressor.”

Amanpour also believes the media should cover more. When given the full background and details of events, society pays attention to the news. “Individual Americans had an incredible reaction to the [2004 Indian Ocean] tsunami—much faster than their government’s reaction,” she said. “Americans are a very moral and compassionate people who believe in extending a helping hand, especially when they get the full facts instead of one-minute clips.” If the news fulfills its responsibility, as she sees it, the world can show its compassion and help promote freedom.

Why does Amanpour believe the press has a responsibility to report all that they see? Are there situations in which it is acceptable to display partiality in reporting the news? Why or why not?

Before the Internet, traditional media determined whether citizen photographs or video footage would become “news.” In 1991, a private citizen’s camcorder footage showed four police officers beating an African American motorist named Rodney King in Los Angeles. After appearing on local independent television station, KTLA-TV, and then the national news, the event began a national discussion on police brutality and ignited riots in Los Angeles.

Erik Ortiz, “George Holliday, Who Taped Rodney King Beating, Urges Others to Share Videos,” *NBC*, 9 June 2015.

The agenda-setting power of traditional media has begun to be appropriated by social media and smartphones, however. Tumbler, Facebook, YouTube, and other Internet sites allow witnesses to instantly upload images and accounts of events and forward the link to friends. Some uploads go viral and attract the attention of the mainstream media, but large network newscasts and major newspapers are still more powerful at initiating or changing a discussion.

The media also promote the public good by offering a platform for public debate and improving citizen awareness. Network news informs the electorate about national issues, elections, and international news. The *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *NBC Nightly News*, and other outlets make sure voters can easily find out what issues affect the nation. Is terrorism on the rise? Is the

dollar weakening? The network news hosts national debates during presidential elections, broadcasts major presidential addresses, and interviews political leaders during times of crisis. Cable news networks now provide coverage of all these topics as well.

Local news has a larger job, despite small budgets and fewer resources (Figure). Local government and local economic policy have a strong and immediate effect on citizens. Is the city government planning on changing property tax rates? Will the school district change the way Common Core tests are administered? When and where is the next town hall meeting or public forum to be held? Local and social media provide a forum for protest and discussion of issues that matter to the community.

 An image of a room with several wooden benches in the foreground and a long desk in the background. People are seated in both locations.

Meetings of local governance, such as this meeting of the Independence City Council in Missouri, are rarely attended by more than gadflies and journalists. (credit: "MoBikeFed"/Flickr)

Want a snapshot of local and state political and policy news? The magazine *Governing* keeps an eye on what is happening in each state, offering articles and analysis on events that occur across the country.

While journalists reporting the news try to present information in an unbiased fashion, sometimes the public seeks opinion and analysis of complicated issues that affect various populations differently, like healthcare reform and the Affordable Care Act. This type of coverage may come in the form of editorials, commentaries, Op-Ed columns, and blogs. These forums allow the editorial staff and informed columnists to express a personal belief and attempt to persuade. If opinion writers are trusted by the public, they have influence.

Walter Cronkite, reporting from Vietnam, had a loyal following. In a broadcast following the Tet Offensive in 1968, Cronkite expressed concern that the United States was mired in a conflict that would end in a stalemate.

“Walter Cronkite’s ‘We Are Mired in Stalemate’ Broadcast, February 27, 1968” *Digital History*, <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/act...m/cronkite.cfm> (November 29, 2015).

His coverage was based on opinion after viewing the war from the ground.

Joel Achenbach, “Cronkite and Vietnam,” *Washington Post*, 18 May 2012.

Although the number of people supporting the war had dwindled by this time, Cronkite’s commentary bolstered opposition. Like editorials, commentaries contain opinion and are often written by specialists in a field. Larry Sabato, a prominent political science professor at the University of Virginia, occasionally writes his thoughts for the *New York Times*. These pieces are based on his expertise in politics and elections.

Larry Sabato, “Our Leaders, Surprise, Have Strong Views,” *New York Times*, 23 February 2009.

Blogs offer more personalized coverage, addressing specific concerns and perspectives for a limited group of readers. Nate Silver’s blog, *FiveThirtyEight*, focuses on elections and politics.

2.1.5 Summary

The media encompass all communications that transmit facts or information to citizens and includes the mass media in print and on the radio, television, and Internet. Television takes many forms, such as local, network, cable, or satellite. Historically, programming was transmitted from networks to local stations and broadcast via the airwaves, while fiber-optic cables now allow for national programming to transmit directly. Technological advances allow on-demand and streaming access for programming, leading to changes in advertising and scheduling practices. Conglomerates are large media corporations that own many stations and other companies; therefore, they can create a monopoly and decrease the flow of information to the public. The media serves to entertain the public, watch for corruption, set the national agenda, and promote the public good. In each of these roles, the media informs the public about what is happening and signals when citizens should act.

A local station that broadcasts national network programming is called a(an) _____ station.

1. affiliate
2. cable
3. digital
4. network

Cable programming is often _____.

1. local
2. national
3. network
4. sports

A conglomerate is a corporation that _____.

1. owns all television news stations in a state
2. owns many businesses and media networks
3. owns only radio stations
4. owns only televisions and newspapers

When acting as an agenda setter, the media _____.

1. decides which issues deserve public attention
2. covers presidential campaigns equally
3. reports on corruption in government
4. brings in advertising revenue for the media corporation

How can conglomerates censor information?

In what ways is media responsible for promoting the public good?

Why is social media an effective way to spread news and information?

2.1.6 Glossary

agenda setting

the media's ability to choose which issues or topics get attention

mass media

the collection of all media forms that communicate information to the general public

public relations

biased communication intended to improve the image of people, companies, or organizations

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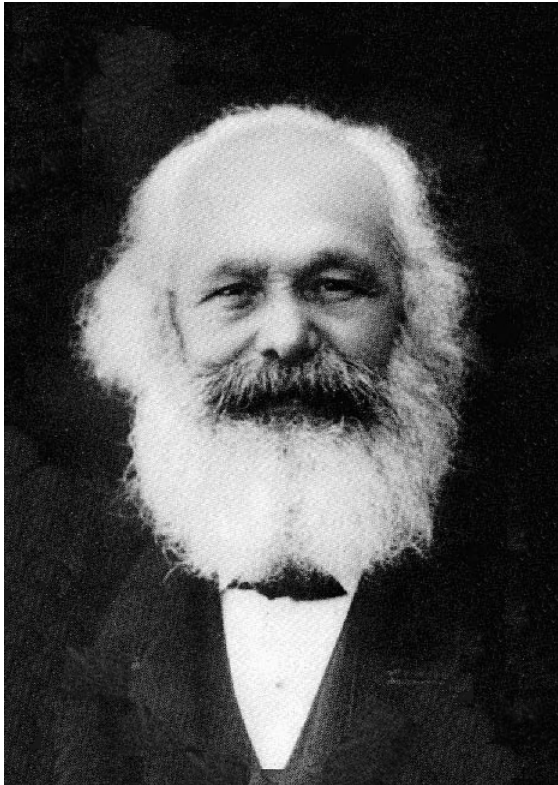
2.2.1 What is Political Economy?

This section explores various ideas connected to the notion of political economies of media. Political economy (PE) is an approach to studying media whose focus is attenuated towards the ways in which media is produced, distributed and consumed, rather than on analysing the interpretations of the signs and symbols found within texts. The combination of the terms ‘political’ and ‘economy’ which make up PE is an explicit reference to the fact that media texts are produced within specific and historically contingent systems which are not merely an ideologically neutral form of exchange, but are conditioned by a range of complex interactions between nation states, international organisations, legal institutions and frameworks, cultural traditions and heritages, other organisations (such as media corporations), technologies, and economic pressures. In other words, PE focuses upon the ways in which politics and economics are not separate entities, as we often encounter them within educational contexts, but that economics and politics are fields which are best understood as being entangled – meaning that they are functionally inseparable – and that understanding elements of this entanglement is pivotal to understanding the way that any society and culture works.

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The history of modern political economy traces back to the works of Adam Smith and Dave Ricardo, who writing in the 18th and 19th Century outlined a model which was broadly supportive of the developments of economic markets and free trade, and was based upon a labour theory of value, which suggested that the value of the goods and commodities produced is directly related to the amount of labour which goes into making that product. Smith and Ricardo's work was taken up in the mid 19th century by Karl Marx who in 1867 published *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*, which functioned as a critique of the emergent political economy of capitalism during the industrial revolution. Marx's major contentions are worth exploring here, as his work remains a foundation for studies of PE, and the basic concepts and categories he proposed are still commonly employed within media studies today, almost 150 years after he devised them.



CC Image from Wikimedia Commons, Author Unknown

Marx begins *Capital* by identifying the commodity – a material entity which can be bought or sold – as the basic unit on which capitalist economies are built, and then proceeds to distinguish between the use-value and exchange value of a commodity. Whereas use-value relates to the value inherent in the way that a good is used, be it to feed someone, provide primary resources for manufacturing or provide information or entertainment to someone, exchange value refers to the fluctuating value which is attached to those goods. Indeed, during the time of the industrial revolution when Marx was writing, the spatial distribution of goods and markets meant that financial speculators were able to amass vast sums (by the standards of the period) by purchasing goods in one location and moving them to another location before selling them at greatly increased prices. Whilst the use-value of these goods remained constant – they would be used in the same way in both areas – their exchange-value varied considerably, allowing a particular privileged class of people (those with the financial resources to buy large quantities of goods and transport them to another city) to exploit the productive labour of others (those who actually produced the goods in the first place) in order to further entrench their wealth. This is a crucial point, as it reveals that Marx's approach to political economy reveals ways that capitalism is dependent upon a system whereby the productive labour of one social group is exploited by another, wealthier class who effectively own the means of production and can further entrench their elite financial status through financial speculation which the working class who create the commodities themselves cannot participate in. Pivotal to Marx's work then, were the social relations between different classes within the emergent capitalist society of which he was a part, and the ways in which privileged classes, which he terms the bourgeoisie, exploit the labour of the working classes, whom Marx calls the proletariat.

Marx builds upon the notion of a labour-theory of value, contending that all exchange value is effectively derived from the amount of time someone had to spend working to create a commodity. This quantifiable temporal unit, however, is itself approached as something which is dynamic and changes depending on social development and structuring. Marx uses examples drawn from the changes to the textile industry within the industrial revolution, in which the introduction of a range of new technologies such as the power-loom – which effectively halved the time that was required to weave a given length of yarn into cloth – transformed the socially accepted amount of time required to produce commodities. Whilst there were still artisans hand weaving after the invention of the power-loom, they only received half the wage they had done previously.

Another important distinction which Marx makes with respect to value, is the introduction of the concept of surplus-value. Whereas the use-value of a commodity relates to the work of the labourer in producing it, under capitalism, Marx posits that the exchange value cannot merely be a direct representation of use-value, as in addition to the work of producing the commodity itself, capitalists (factory owners and merchants) are required to add value to the commodity in order to extract profits from its sale and subsequent circulation within markets. These added costs to the exchange value of commodities are what Marx terms surplus value. This again is used by Marx to suggest that capitalism is an inherently exploitative socio-economic system, as this means that it is predicated upon the capitalist classes from extracting value which is removed from the use-value of goods, and this is what allows them to make a profit.

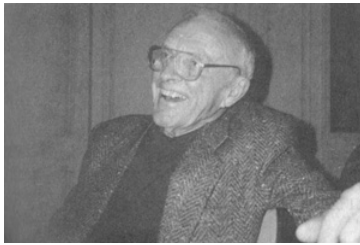
Furthermore, in a social situation in which advances in science and technology frequently involve the insertion of machines which can reduce the amount of labour required to produce commodities – a process which is still very much relevant to a contemporary situation where digital technologies such as non-linear editing software, digital cameras and cloud-based server systems can allow the production of media with dwindling amounts of labour time – the tendency over time is for the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This basically states that because technology advances over time, equal quantities of commodities can be produced in diminishing temporal durations, which entails that their exchange value will depreciate if all else is equal. Consequently, Marx argues that in order to maintain and grow profits, capitalists have to enact more and more repressive conditions within the workplace to counteract the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

Philosophically, Marx inverts G.W. Hegel's idealist perspective, contending that:

‘The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness’ Marx, 1859 p4

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Moving from European contexts to those originating from the USA, Dallas Smythe (1981) is often cited as introducing a further key element to PE approaches to media, inverting the assumption central to prior approaches to PE which focussed upon meanings, messages and information as the central commodity which relates to media. Smythe instead contends that the economic relationship which is the primary driver of media as an industry is one whereby audiences – or more specifically the attentive capacities of audiences – are sold to advertisers.

This approach makes sense when moving to the commercialised American media context, as it sharply departs from many European countries which, until the deregulation and privatisations of neo-liberal regimes under leaders such as Margaret Thatcher during the 1980s, were dominated by public service broadcasting, in which there was often no commercial advertising as the media was funded by central governments as a public good with a mandate to both inform and entertain the public. However, when we approach contemporary global media networks, the role of public service media has generally receded, with commercial networks providing a far greater proportion of media content in countries like the UK than in the 20th Century, when there only existed a handful of television channels, and almost half the content was created in house by the BBC.

A very similar broadcasting history can be observed within the New Zealand context. Up to the 1980s the broadcasting scene, in both radio and television, was dominated by the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, an organization very like the BBC in terms of funding, structure and monopoly power. However, its descendants, TVNZ and RNZ, are competing with commercial interests, for audience attention, funding and content, in a very different media market.

The notion of the audience commodity is useful in conceptualising the PE of media, as it further refines the boundaries of what can be understood as a commodity, but does so in a way which helps to explore exactly why and how a vast amount of contemporary media – newspapers, television, radio, and websites amongst other modes – is funded. These forms are typically free or very cheap at the point of access for the ‘consumer,’ but the economic cost of production is paid for by the insertion of advertising into the media being viewed. The media is thus not paid for by the audience (the cost of a printed newspaper comes nowhere near covering the costs of the paper, printing, journalists, designers, copy editors etc that went into the production of the newspaper, and watching television or surfing the web is usually free) but is funded by the advertisers, who are purchasing the attention of an audience. Buying advertising time during peak hours, or in a more popular newspaper, costs proportionally more precisely because the number of eyeballs the advertising reaches is enlarged.

This economic situation is also of critical relevance to the ideological context of media content. As the media is funded by commercial (primarily corporate) organisations, the materials which are produced by this system are highly unlikely to be overtly critical of corporate capitalism and consumerism. Indeed, there have been notable cases whereby advertisers have threatened to withdraw funding from television networks if particular programs are aired as they are concerned that this will negatively affect brand connotations. An example of this is highlighted in the video below, an extract from the feature-length documentary film *The Corporation* (dir. Joel Bakan 2004)



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:
<https://opentextbc.ca/mediastudies101/?p=73>

2.4.1 Discussion

1. How might we understand the phrase ‘the cost of free media’ with reference to the notion of the audience commodity?

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Following Smythe's exposition of the audience and Jurgen Habermas's (1991) elucidation of mass media as providing an apparatus whereby elite sectors of society can transform the democratising potential of the public sphere, a series of leftist academic media scholars have attempted to delineate the precise methods by which the mass media operates as a distorting lens which represents the vested interests of economic elites.

Most prominent within this PE-centred approach has been the 'propaganda model' (PM) of mass media presented by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media* (1988). Chomsky and Herman begin by proclaiming that

The mass media serve as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society. In a world of concentrated wealth and major conflicts of class interest, to fulfil this role requires systematic propaganda. Chomsky and Herman 1988:1

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PE led approaches to the study of digital media again fall into several distinct areas which approach the production of digital media from disparate areas. While Marxist approaches are again often central, there exist an additional series of approaches which consider the ways in which production of digital media, and of digital commodities in general depart in certain respects from other modes of information access and distribution.

Some of the early approaches to new/digital media focused upon the ways that the increasingly widespread distribution of networked computers afforded a mode of access which was a radical departure. Previously media had been dominated by broadcast technologies and mass media generally, whereby a very small volume of individuals were entrenched within a privileged position as content creators, and were able to broadcast mediated content from centres out to the millions of citizens who could only receive media. Mass media, then can be understood as both a one-to-many model of communication as well as a one way model, as only those who work in broadcasting can produce media, whilst the vast majority of citizens can only receive information. Such a one-to-many system of communications corresponds to the model of a centralised network.

By contrast, the Internet heralded the arrival of an alternative model, in which any network user was able to connect to any other network user(s), and was able to both send and receive mediated communications. Rather than being a one-to-many mode of communication, the Internet allowed one-to-one, one-to-many and many-to-many forms of discourse, taking the form of a distributed network. Additionally the hierarchical restrictions to access had seemingly tumbled down, with any citizen who possessed a computer, modem and internet connection able to produce mediated content. This led to a wave of early Internet scholarship which saw the Internet as a technology which contained a vast democratising potential, realising some of the formal elements discussed by socialist theorists of media such as Bertold Brecht (1932) and Hans-Magnus Enzensburger (1970) as necessary preconditions for the formation of a democratic and participatory media and culture, negating the criticisms made by Jurgen Habermas (1991) which posit the media as a fundamentally anti-democratic mode of communication which turned active citizens into passive consumers.

Whereas mass media representation reinforced and re-inscribed the structures of representative democracies, whereby an economic and political elite who have access to the means of media production and distribution are able to disproportionately influence the majority of the populace by means of their wealth (of both power and capital), networked electronic media allegedly creates structures predicated upon non-hierarchical interactions.

Such claims have been tempered, however, by the realisation that while contemporary media technologies have greatly increased the ability of certain previously marginalised groups to effectively communicate their concerns and participate in mediated discourse, the material reality of information technology commodities within the network society, has not seen social inequalities diminish and democratic participation increase. The digital divide exists as one of many divides between the haves and have-nots in contemporary society alongside divisions in wealth, education, health care, and technical expertise. Expecting the introduction of digital communications platforms to enact a process whereby these inequalities simply dissipate in the face of the deterministic properties of new technology is a utopian fantasy. As Espen Aarseth (1997:67) reminds us:

The belief that new (and ever more complex) technologies are in and of themselves democratic is not only false but dangerous. New technology creates new opportunities, but there is no reason to believe that the increased complexity of our technological lives works toward increased equality for all subjected to the technology.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

[3.1: The Evolution of the Internet](#)

[3.2: Social Media and Web 2.0](#)

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Learning Objectives

- Define *protocol* and *decentralization* as they relate to the early Internet.
- Identify technologies that made the Internet accessible.
- Explain the causes and effects of the dot-com boom and crash.

From its early days as a military-only network to its current status as one of the developed world's primary sources of information and communication, the Internet has come a long way in a short period of time. Yet there are a few elements that have stayed constant and that provide a coherent thread for examining the origins of the now-pervasive medium. The first is the persistence of the Internet—its Cold War beginnings necessarily influencing its design as a decentralized, indestructible communication network.

The second element is the development of rules of communication for computers that enable the machines to turn raw data into useful information. These rules, or protocols, have been developed through consensus by computer scientists to facilitate and control online communication and have shaped the way the Internet works. Facebook is a simple example of a protocol: Users can easily communicate with one another, but only through acceptance of protocols that include wall posts, comments, and messages. Facebook's protocols make communication possible and control that communication.

These two elements connect the Internet's origins to its present-day incarnation. Keeping them in mind as you read will help you comprehend the history of the Internet, from the Cold War to the Facebook era.

3.1.1 The History of the Internet

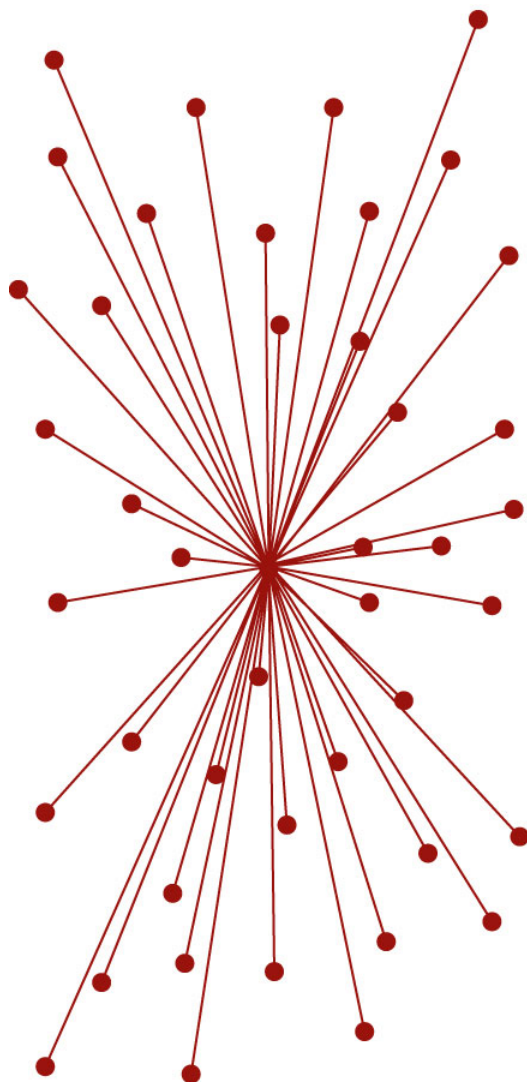
The near indestructibility of information on the Internet derives from a military principle used in secure voice transmission: decentralization. In the early 1970s, the RAND Corporation developed a technology (later called “packet switching”) that allowed users to send secure voice messages. In contrast to a system known as the hub-and-spoke model, where the telephone operator (the “hub”) would patch two people (the “spokes”) through directly, this new system allowed for a voice message to be sent through an entire network, or web, of carrier lines, without the need to travel through a central hub, allowing for many different possible paths to the destination.

During the Cold War, the U.S. military was concerned about a nuclear attack destroying the hub in its hub-and-spoke model; with this new web-like model, a secure voice transmission would be more likely to endure a large-scale attack. A web of data pathways would still be able to transmit secure voice “packets,” even if a few of the nodes—places where the web of connections intersected—were destroyed. Only through the destruction of all the nodes in the web could the data traveling along it be completely wiped out—an unlikely event in the case of a highly decentralized network.

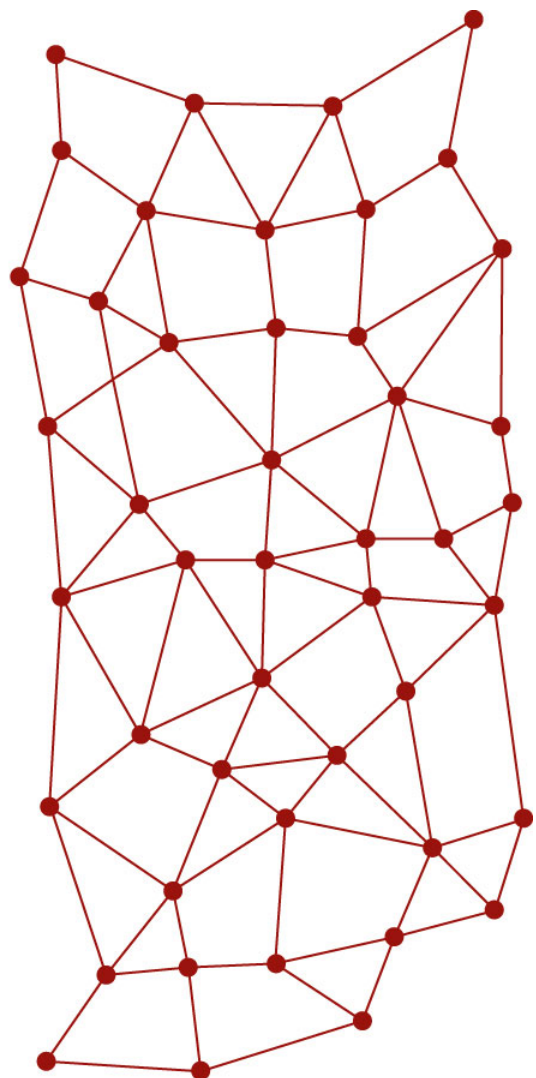
This decentralized network could only function through common communication protocols. Just as we use certain protocols when communicating over a telephone—“hello,” “goodbye,” and “hold on for a minute” are three examples—any sort of machine-to-machine communication must also use protocols. These protocols constitute a shared language enabling computers to understand each other clearly and easily.

3.1.2 The Building Blocks of the Internet

In 1973, the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) began research on protocols to allow computers to communicate over a distributed network. This work paralleled work done by the RAND Corporation, particularly in the realm of a web-based network model of communication. Instead of using electronic signals to send an unending stream of ones and zeros over a line (the equivalent of a direct voice connection), DARPA used this new packet-switching technology to send small bundles of data. This way, a message that would have been an unbroken stream of binary data—extremely vulnerable to errors and corruption—could be packaged as only a few hundred numbers.



Centralized Network



Distributed Network

Figure 11.2 Centralized versus distributed communication networks

Imagine a telephone conversation in which any static in the signal would make the message incomprehensible. Whereas humans can infer meaning from “Meet me [static] the restaurant at 8:30” (we replace the static with the word *at*), computers do not necessarily have that logical linguistic capability. To a computer, this constant stream of data is incomplete—or “corrupted,” in technological terminology—and confusing. Considering the susceptibility of electronic communication to noise or other forms of disruption, it would seem like computer-to-computer transmission would be nearly impossible.

However, the packets in this packet-switching technology have something that allows the receiving computer to make sure the packet has arrived uncorrupted. Because of this new technology and the shared protocols that made computer-to-computer transmission possible, a single large message could be broken into many pieces and sent through an entire web of connections, speeding up transmission and making that transmission more secure.

One of the necessary parts of a network is a host. A host is a physical node that is directly connected to the Internet and “directs traffic” by routing packets of data to and from other computers connected to it. In a normal network, a specific computer is usually not directly connected to the Internet; it is connected through a host. A host in this case is identified by an Internet Protocol, or IP, address (a concept that is explained in greater detail later). Each unique IP address refers to a single location on the global Internet, but that IP address can serve as a gateway for many different computers. For example, a college campus may have one global IP address for all of its students’ computers, and each student’s computer might then have its own local IP address on the school’s

network. This nested structure allows billions of different global hosts, each with any number of computers connected within their internal networks. Think of a campus postal system: All students share the same global address (1000 College Drive, Anywhere, VT 08759, for example), but they each have an internal mailbox within that system.

The early Internet was called ARPANET, after the U.S. Advanced Research Projects Agency (which added “Defense” to its name and became DARPA in 1973), and consisted of just four hosts: UCLA, Stanford, UC Santa Barbara, and the University of Utah. Now there are over half a million hosts, and each of those hosts likely serves thousands of people. Central Intelligence Agency, “Country Comparison: Internet Hosts,” *World Factbook*, www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2184rank.html. Each host uses protocols to connect to an ever-growing network of computers. Because of this, the Internet does not exist in any one place in particular; rather, it is the name we give to the huge network of interconnected computers that collectively form the entity that we think of as the Internet. The Internet is not a physical structure; it is the protocols that make this communication possible.

TCP Switching: Exposes Circuits to IP

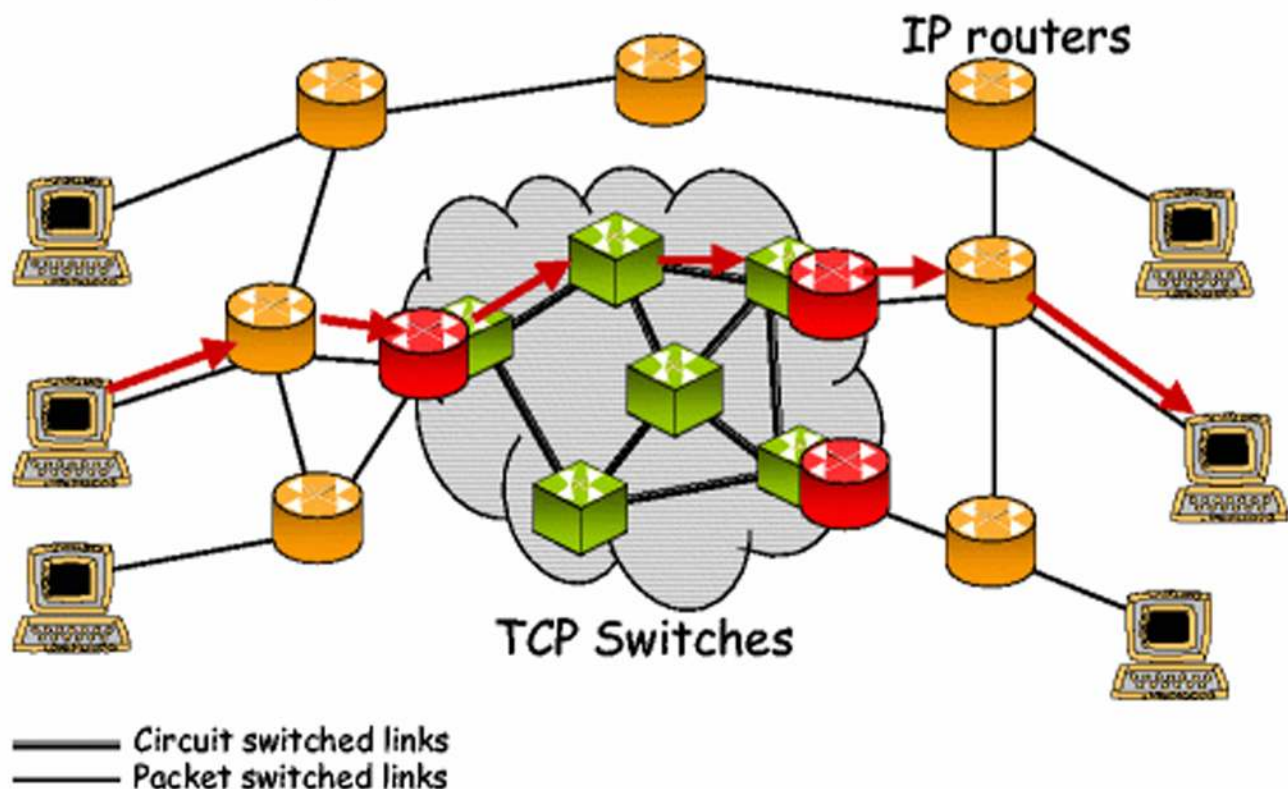


Figure 11.3 A TCP gateway is like a post office because of the way that it directs information to the correct location.

One of the other core components of the Internet is the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) gateway. Proposed in a 1974 paper, the TCP gateway acts “like a postal service.” Vinton Cerf, Yogen Dalal, and Carl Sunshine, “Specification of Internet Transmission Control Program,” December 1974, <http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc675>. Without knowing a specific physical address, any computer on the network can ask for the owner of any IP address, and the TCP gateway will consult its directory of IP address listings to determine exactly which computer the requester is trying to contact. The development of this technology was an essential building block in the interlinking of networks, as computers could now communicate with each other without knowing the specific address

of a recipient; the TCP gateway would figure it all out. In addition, the TCP gateway checks for errors and ensures that data reaches its destination uncorrupted. Today, this combination of TCP gateways and IP addresses is called TCP/IP and is essentially a worldwide phone book for every host on the Internet.

3.1.3 You've Got Mail: The Beginnings of the Electronic Mailbox

Email has, in one sense or another, been around for quite a while. Originally, electronic messages were recorded within a single mainframe computer system. Each person working on the computer would have a personal folder, so sending that person a message required nothing more than creating a new document in that person's folder. It was just like leaving a note on someone's desk. Ian Peter, "The History of Email," The Internet History Project, 2004, <http://www.nethistory.info/History%20of%20the%20Internet/email.html>. so that the person would see it when he or she logged onto the computer.

However, once networks began to develop, things became slightly more complicated. Computer programmer Ray Tomlinson is credited with inventing the naming system we have today, using the @ symbol to denote the server (or host, from the previous section). In other words, name@gmail.com tells the host "gmail.com" (Google's email server) to drop the message into the folder belonging to "name." Tomlinson is credited with writing the first network email using his program SNDMSG in 1971. This invention of a simple standard for email is often cited as one of the most important factors in the rapid spread of the Internet, and is still one of the most widely used Internet services.

The use of email grew in large part because of later commercial developments, especially America Online, that made connecting to email much easier than it had been at its inception. Internet service providers (ISPs) packaged email accounts with Internet access, and almost all web browsers (such as Netscape, discussed later in the section) included a form of email service. In addition to the ISPs, email services like Hotmail and Yahoo! Mail provided free email addresses paid for by small text ads at the bottom of every email message sent. These free "webmail" services soon expanded to comprise a large part of the email services that are available today. Far from the original maximum inbox sizes of a few megabytes, today's email services, like Google's Gmail service, generally provide gigabytes of free storage space.

Email has revolutionized written communication. The speed and relatively inexpensive nature of email makes it a prime competitor of postal services—including FedEx and UPS—that pride themselves on speed. Communicating via email with someone on the other end of the world is just as quick and inexpensive as communicating with a next-door neighbor. However, the growth of Internet shopping and online companies such as Amazon.com has in many ways made the postal service and shipping companies more prominent—not necessarily for communication, but for delivery and remote business operations.

3.1.4 Hypertext: Web 1.0

In 1989, Tim Berners-Lee, a graduate of Oxford University and software engineer at CERN (the European particle physics laboratory), had the idea of using a new kind of protocol to share documents and information throughout the local CERN network. Instead of transferring regular text-based documents, he created a new language called hypertext markup language (HTML). *Hypertext* was a new word for text that goes beyond the boundaries of a single document. Hypertext can include links to other documents (hyperlinks), text-style formatting, images, and a wide variety of other components. The basic idea is that documents can be constructed out of a variety of links and can be viewed just as if they are on the user's computer.

This new language required a new communication protocol so that computers could interpret it, and Berners-Lee decided on the name hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP). Through HTTP, hypertext documents can be sent from computer to computer and can then be interpreted by a browser, which turns the HTML files into readable web pages. The browser that Berners-Lee created, called World Wide Web, was a combination browser-editor, allowing users to view other HTML documents and create their own. Tim Berners-Lee, "The WorldWideWeb Browser," 2009, www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/WorldWideWeb.

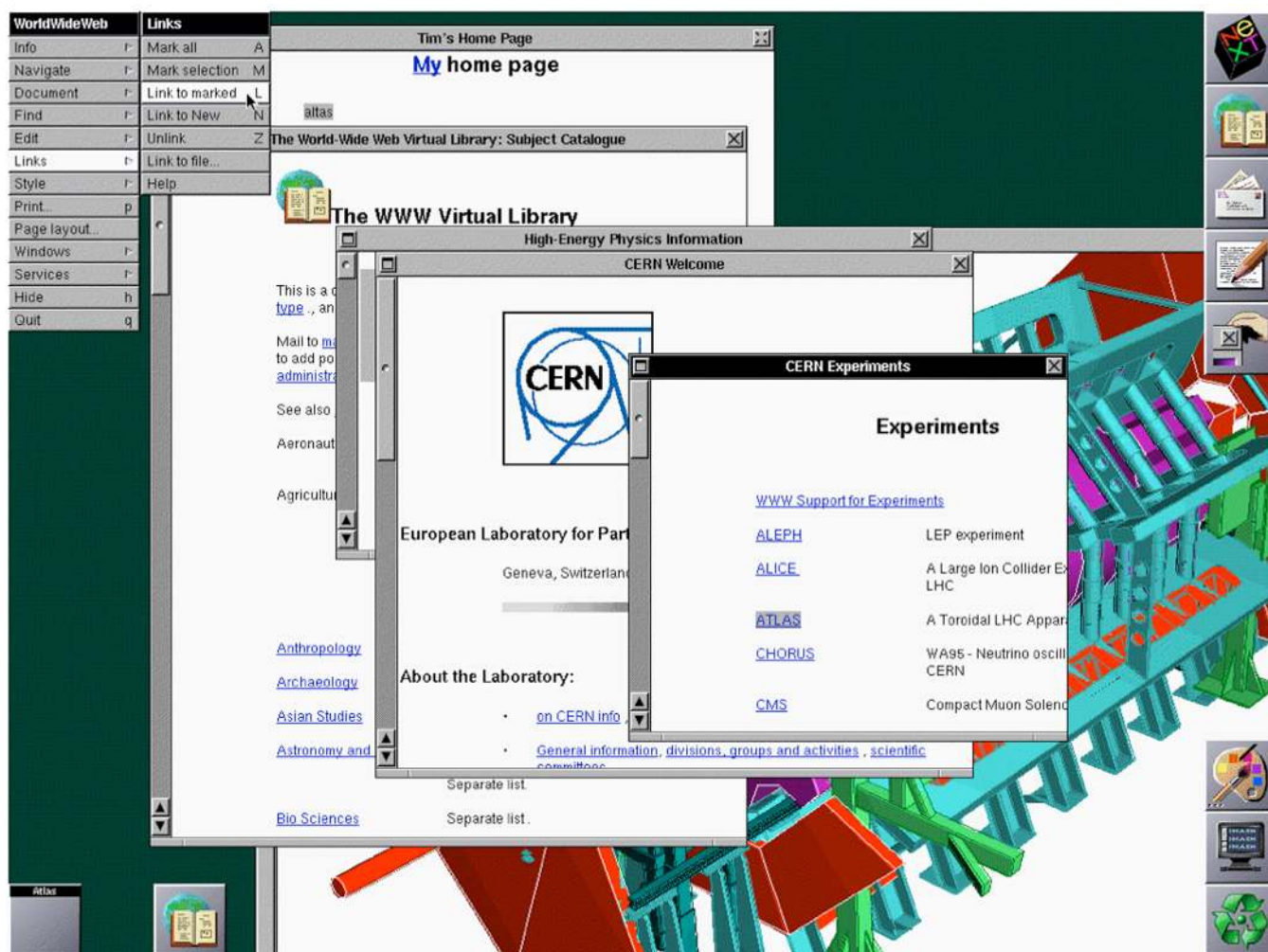


Figure 11.4 Tim Berners-Lee's first web browser was also a web page editor.

Modern browsers, like Microsoft Internet Explorer and Mozilla Firefox, only allow for the viewing of web pages; other increasingly complicated tools are now marketed for creating web pages, although even the most complicated page can be written entirely from a program like Windows Notepad. The reason web pages can be created with the simplest tools is the adoption of certain protocols by the most common browsers. Because Internet Explorer, Firefox, Apple Safari, Google Chrome, and other browsers all interpret the same code in more or less the same way, creating web pages is as simple as learning how to speak the language of these browsers.

In 1991, the same year that Berners-Lee created his web browser, the Internet connection service Q-Link was renamed America Online, or AOL for short. This service would eventually grow to employ over 20,000 people, on the basis of making Internet access available (and, critically, simple) for anyone with a telephone line. Although the web in 1991 was not what it is today, AOL's software allowed its users to create communities based on just about any subject, and it only required a dial-up modem—a device that connects any computer to the Internet via a telephone line—and the telephone line itself.

In addition, AOL incorporated two technologies—chat rooms and Instant Messenger—into a single program (along with a web browser). Chat rooms allowed many users to type live messages to a “room” full of people, while Instant Messenger allowed two users to communicate privately via text-based messages. The most important aspect of AOL was its encapsulation of all these once-disparate programs into a single user-friendly bundle. Although AOL was later disparaged for customer service issues like its users' inability to deactivate their service, its role in bringing the Internet to mainstream users was instrumental. Tom Zeller, Jr., “Canceling AOL? Just Offer Your Firstborn,” *New York Times*, August 29, 2005, all <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/29/technology/29link.html>.

In contrast to AOL's proprietary services, the World Wide Web had to be viewed through a standalone web browser. The first of these browsers to make its mark was the program Mosaic, released by the National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois. Mosaic was offered for free and grew very quickly in popularity due to features that now seem integral to the web. Things like bookmarks, which allow users to save the location of particular pages without having to remember them, and images, now an integral part of the web, were all inventions that made the web more usable for many people. National Center for Supercomputing Appliances, "About NCSA Mosaic," 2010, <http://www.ncsa.illinois.edu/Projects/mosaic.html>.

Although the web browser Mosaic has not been updated since 1997, developers who worked on it went on to create Netscape Navigator, an extremely popular browser during the 1990s. AOL later bought the Netscape company, and the Navigator browser was discontinued in 2008, largely because Netscape Navigator had lost the market to Microsoft's Internet Explorer web browser, which came preloaded on Microsoft's ubiquitous Windows operating system. However, Netscape had long been converting its Navigator software into an open-source program called Mozilla Firefox, which is now the second-most-used web browser on the Internet (detailed in Table 11.1). NetMarketShare, "Browser Market Share," <http://marketshare.hitslink.com/browser-market-share.aspx?qprid=0&qpcal=1&qptimeframe=M&qpsp=132>. Firefox represents about a quarter of the market—not bad, considering its lack of advertising and Microsoft's natural advantage of packaging Internet Explorer with the majority of personal computers.

Table 11.1 Browser Market Share (as of February 2010)

Browser	Total Market Share
Microsoft Internet Explorer	62.12%
Firefox	24.43%
Chrome	5.22%
Safari	4.53%
Opera	2.38%

Source: Courtesy of Net Applications.com <http://www.netapplications.com/>

3.1.5 For Sale: The Web

As web browsers became more available as a less-moderated alternative to AOL's proprietary service, the web became something like a free-for-all of startup companies. The web of this period, often referred to as Web 1.0, featured many specialty sites that used the Internet's ability for global, instantaneous communication to create a new type of business. Another name for this free-for-all of the 1990s is the "dot-com boom." During the boom, it seemed as if almost anyone could build a website and sell it for millions of dollars. However, the "dot-com crash" that occurred later that decade seemed to say otherwise. Quite a few of these Internet startup companies went bankrupt, taking their shareholders down with them. Alan Greenspan, then the chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve, called this phenomenon "irrational exuberance," Alan Greenspan, "The Challenge of Central Banking in a Democratic Society," (lecture, American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, Washington, DC, December 5, 1996), <http://www.federalreserve.gov/boarddocs/speeches/1996/19961205.htm>. In large part because investors did not necessarily know how to analyze these particular business plans, and companies that had never turned a profit could be sold for millions. The new business models of the Internet may have done well in the stock market, but they were not necessarily sustainable. In many ways, investors collectively failed to analyze the business prospects of these companies, and once they realized their mistakes (and the companies went bankrupt), much of the recent market growth evaporated. The invention of new technologies can bring with it the belief that old business tenets no longer apply, but this dangerous belief—the "irrational exuberance" Greenspan spoke of—is not necessarily conducive to long-term growth.

Some lucky dot-com businesses formed during the boom survived the crash and are still around today. For example, eBay, with its online auctions, turned what seemed like a dangerous practice (sending money to a stranger you met over the Internet) into a daily occurrence. A less-fortunate company, eToys.com, got off to a promising start—its stock quadrupled on the day it went public in 1999—but then filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2001. Cecily Barnes, "eToys files for Chapter 11," *CNET*, March 7, 2001, <http://news.cnet.com/2100-1017-253706.html>.

One of these startups, theGlobe.com, provided one of the earliest social networking services that exploded in popularity. When theGlobe.com went public, its stock shot from a target price of \$9 to a close of \$63.50 a share. Dawn Kawamoto, “TheGlobe.com’s IPO one for the books,” *CNET*, November 13, 1998, <http://news.cnet.com/2100-1023-217913.html>. The site itself was started in 1995, building its business on advertising. As skepticism about the dot-com boom grew and advertisers became increasingly skittish about the value of online ads, theGlobe.com ceased to be profitable and shut its doors as a social networking site. theglobe.com, “About Us,” 2009, www.theglobe.com/. Although advertising is pervasive on the Internet today, the current model—largely based on the highly targeted Google AdSense service—did not come around until much later. In the earlier dot-com years, the same ad might be shown on thousands of different web pages, whereas now advertising is often specifically targeted to the content of an individual page.

However, that did not spell the end of social networking on the Internet. Social networking had been going on since at least the invention of Usenet in 1979 (detailed later in the chapter), but the recurring problem was always the same: profitability. This model of free access to user-generated content departed from almost anything previously seen in media, and revenue streams would have to be just as radical.

3.1.6 The Early Days of Social Media

The shared, generalized protocols of the Internet have allowed it to be easily adapted and extended into many different facets of our lives. The Internet shapes everything, from our day-to-day routine—the ability to read newspapers from around the world, for example—to the way research and collaboration are conducted. There are three important aspects of communication that the Internet has changed, and these have instigated profound changes in the way we connect with one another socially: the speed of information, the volume of information, and the “democratization” of publishing, or the ability of anyone to publish ideas on the web.

One of the Internet’s largest and most revolutionary changes has come about through social networking. Because of Twitter, we can now see what all our friends are doing in real time; because of blogs, we can consider the opinions of complete strangers who may never write in traditional print; and because of Facebook, we can find people we haven’t talked to for decades, all without making a single awkward telephone call.

Recent years have seen an explosion of new content and services; although the phrase “social media” now seems to be synonymous with websites like Facebook and Twitter, it is worthwhile to consider all the ways a social media platform affects the Internet experience.

3.1.7 How Did We Get Here? The Late 1970s, Early 1980s, and Usenet

Almost as soon as TCP stitched the various networks together, a former DARPA scientist named Larry Roberts founded the company Telnet, the first commercial packet-switching company. Two years later, in 1977, the invention of the dial-up modem (in combination with the wider availability of personal computers like the Apple II) made it possible for anyone around the world to access the Internet. With availability extended beyond purely academic and military circles, the Internet quickly became a staple for computer hobbyists.

One of the consequences of the spread of the Internet to hobbyists was the founding of Usenet. In 1979, University of North Carolina graduate students Tom Truscott and Jim Ellis connected three computers in a small network and used a series of programming scripts to post and receive messages. In a very short span of time, this system spread all over the burgeoning Internet. Much like an electronic version of community bulletin boards, anyone with a computer could post a topic or reply on Usenet.

The group was fundamentally and explicitly anarchic, as outlined by the posting “What is Usenet?” This document says, “Usenet is not a democracy ... there is no person or group in charge of Usenet ... Usenet cannot be a democracy, autocracy, or any other kind of ‘-acy.’” Mark Moraes, Chip Salzenberg, and Gene Spafford, “What is Usenet?” December 28, 1999, <http://www.faqs.org/faqs/usenet/what-is/part1/>. Usenet was not used only for socializing, however, but also for collaboration. In some ways, the service allowed a new kind of collaboration that seemed like the start of a revolution: “I was able to join rec.kites and collectively people in Australia and New Zealand helped me solve a problem and get a circular two-line kite to fly,” one user told the United Kingdom’s *Guardian*. Simon Jeffery and others, “A People’s History of the Internet: From Arpanet in 1969 to Today,” *Guardian* (London), October 23, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/interactive/2009/oct/23/internet-arpanet>.

3.1.8 GeoCities: Yahoo! Pioneers

Fast-forward to 1995: The president and founder of Beverly Hills Internet, David Bohnett, announces that the name of his company is now “GeoCities.” GeoCities built its business by allowing users (“homesteaders”) to create web pages in “communities” for free, with the stipulation that the company placed a small advertising banner at the top of each page. Anyone could register a GeoCities site and subsequently build a web page about a topic. Almost all of the community names, like Broadway (live theater) and Athens (philosophy and education), were centered on specific topics. While GeoCities is no longer in business, the Internet Archive maintains the site at <http://www.archive.org/web/geocities.php>. Information taken from December 21, 1996.

This idea of centering communities on specific topics may have come from Usenet. In Usenet, the domain alt.rec.kites refers to a specific topic (kites) within a category (recreation) within a larger community (alternative topics). This hierarchical model allowed users to organize themselves across the vastness of the Internet, even on a large site like GeoCities. The difference with GeoCities was that it allowed users to do much more than post only text (the limitation of Usenet), while constraining them to a relatively small pool of resources. Although each GeoCities user had only a few megabytes of web space, standardized pictures—like mailbox icons and back buttons—were hosted on GeoCities’s main server. GeoCities was such a large part of the Internet, and these standard icons were so ubiquitous, that they have now become a veritable part of the Internet’s cultural history. The Web Elements category of the site Internet Archaeology is a good example of how pervasive GeoCities graphics became. Internet Archaeology, 2010, <http://www.internetarchaeology.org/swebelements.htm>.

GeoCities built its business on a freemium model, where basic services are free but subscribers pay extra for things like commercial pages or shopping carts. Other Internet businesses, like Skype and Flickr, use the same model to keep a vast user base while still profiting from frequent users. Since loss of online advertising revenue was seen as one of the main causes of the dot-com crash, many current web startups are turning toward this freemium model to diversify their income streams. Claire Cain Miller, “Ad Revenue on the Web? No Sure Bet,” *New York Times*, May 24, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/25/technology/startups/25startup.html>.

GeoCities’s model was so successful that the company Yahoo! bought it for \$3.6 billion at its peak in 1999. At the time, GeoCities was the third-most-visited site on the web (behind Yahoo! and AOL), so it seemed like a sure bet. A decade later, on October 26, 2009, Yahoo! closed GeoCities for good in every country except Japan.

Diversification of revenue has become one of the most crucial elements of Internet businesses; from the *Wall Street Journal* online to YouTube, almost every website is now looking for multiple income streams to support its services.

Key Takeaways

- The two primary characteristics of the original Internet were decentralization and free, open protocols that anyone could use. As a result of its decentralized “web” model of organization, the Internet can store data in many different places at once. This makes it very useful for backing up data and very difficult to destroy data that might be unwanted. Protocols play an important role in this, because they allow some degree of control to exist without a central command structure.
- Two of the most important technological developments were the personal computer (such as the Apple II) and the dial-up modem, which allowed anyone with a phone line to access the developing Internet. America Online also played an important role, making it very easy for practically anyone with a computer to use the Internet. Another development, the web browser, allowed for access to and creation of web pages all over the Internet.
- With the advent of the web browser, it seemed as if anyone could make a website that people wanted to use. The problem was that these sites were driven largely by venture capital and grossly inflated initial public offerings of their stock. After failing to secure any real revenue stream, their stock plummeted, the market crashed, and many of these companies went out of business. In later years, companies tried to diversify their investments, particularly by using a “freemium” model of revenue, in which a company would both sell premium services and advertise, while offering a free pared-down service to casual users.

? Exercise 3.1.1

Websites have many different ways of paying for themselves, and this can say a lot about both the site and its audience. The business models of today's websites may also directly reflect the lessons learned during the early days of the Internet. Start this exercise by reviewing a list of common ways that websites pay for themselves, how they arrived at these methods, and what it might say about them:

- Advertising: The site probably has many casual viewers and may not necessarily be well established. If there are targeted ads (such as ads directed toward stay-at-home parents with children), then it is possible the site is successful with a small audience.
- Subscription option: The site may be a news site that prides itself on accuracy of information or lack of bias, whose regular readers are willing to pay a premium for the guarantee of quality material. Alternately, the site may cater to a small demographic of Internet users by providing them with exclusive, subscription-only content.
- Selling services: Online services, such as file hosting, or offline services and products are probably the clearest way to determine a site's revenue stream. However, these commercial sites often are not prized for their unbiased information, and their bias can greatly affect the content on the site.

Choose a website that you visit often, and list which of these revenue streams the site might have. How might this affect the content on the site? Is there a visible effect, or does the site try to hide it? Consider how events during the early history of the Internet may have affected the way the site operates now. Write down a revenue stream that the site does not currently have and how the site designers might implement such a revenue stream.

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Learning Objectives

- Identify the major social networking sites, and give possible uses and demographics for each one.
- Show the positive and negative effects of blogs on the distribution and creation of information.
- Explain the ways privacy has been addressed on the Internet.
- Identify new information that marketers can use because of social networking.

Although GeoCities lost market share, and although theGlobe.com never really made it to the 21st century, social networking has persisted. There are many different types of social media available today, from social networking sites like Facebook to blogging services like Blogger and WordPress.com. All these sites bring something different to the table, and a few of them even try to bring just about everything to the table at once.

3.2.1 Social Networking

Social networking services—like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google Buzz, and MySpace—provide a limited but public platform for users to create a “profile.” This can range anywhere from the 140-character (that’s letters and spaces, not words) “tweets” on Twitter, to the highly customizable MySpace, which allows users to blog, customize color schemes, add background images, and play music. Each of these services has its key demographic—MySpace, for example, is particularly geared toward younger users. Its huge array of features made it attractive to this demographic at first, but eventually it was overrun with corporate marketing and solicitations for pornographic websites, leading many users to abandon the service. In addition, competing social networking sites like Facebook offer superior interfaces that have lured away many of MySpace’s users. MySpace has attempted to catch up by upgrading its own interface, but it now faces the almost insurmountable obstacle of already-satisfied users of competing social networking services. As Internet technology evolves rapidly, most users have few qualms about moving to whichever site offers the better experience; most users have profiles and accounts on many services at once. But as relational networks become more and more established and concentrated on a few social media sites, it becomes increasingly difficult for newcomers and lagging challengers to offer the same rich networking experience. For a Facebook user with hundreds of friends in his or her social network, switching to MySpace and bringing along his or her entire network of friends is a daunting and infeasible prospect. Google has attempted to circumvent the problem of luring users to create new social networks by building its Buzz service into its popular Gmail, ensuring that Buzz has a built-in user base and lowering the social costs of joining a new social network by leveraging users’ Gmail contact lists. It remains to be seen if Google will be truly successful in establishing a vital new social networking service, but its tactic of integrating Buzz into Gmail underscores how difficult it has become to compete with established social networks like Twitter and Facebook.

Whereas MySpace initially catered to a younger demographic, LinkedIn caters to business professionals looking for networking opportunities. LinkedIn is free to join and allows users to post resumes and job qualifications (rather than astrological signs and favorite television shows). Its tagline, “Relationships matter,” emphasizes the role of an increasingly networked world in business; just as a musician might use MySpace to promote a new band, a LinkedIn user can use the site to promote professional services. While these two sites have basically the same structure, they fulfill different purposes for different social groups; the character of social networking is highly dependent on the type of social circle.

Twitter offers a different approach to social networking, allowing users to “tweet” 140-character messages to their “followers,” making it something of a hybrid of instant messaging and blogging. Twitter is openly searchable, meaning that anyone can visit the site and quickly find out what other Twitter users are saying about any subject. Twitter has proved useful for journalists reporting on breaking news, as well as highlighting the “best of” the Internet. Twitter has also been useful for marketers looking for a free public forum to disseminate marketing messages. It became profitable in December 2009 through a \$25 million deal allowing Google and Microsoft to display its users’ 140-character messages in their search results. Eliot Van Buskirk, “Twitter Earns First Profit Selling Search to Google, Microsoft,” *Wired*, December 21, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2009/12/twitter-earns-first-profit-selling-search-to-google-microsoft>. Facebook, originally deployed exclusively to Ivy League schools, has since opened its doors to anyone over 13 with an email account. With the explosion of the service and its huge growth among older demographics, “My parents joined Facebook” has become a common complaint. See the blog at <http://myparentsjoinedfacebook.com/> for examples on the subject.

Another category of social media, blogs began as an online, public version of a diary or journal. Short for “web logs,” these personal sites give anyone a platform to write about anything they want to. Posting tweets on the Twitter service is considered micro-blogging (because of the extremely short length of the posts). Some services, like LiveJournal, highlight their ability to provide up-to-date reports on personal feelings, even going so far as to add a “mood” shorthand at the end of every post. The Blogger service (now owned by Google) allows users with Google accounts to follow friends’ blogs and post comments. WordPress.com, the company that created the open-source blogging platform WordPress.org, and LiveJournal both follow the freemium model by allowing a basic selection of settings for free, with the option to pay for things like custom styles and photo hosting space. What these all have in common, however, is their bundling of social networking (such as the ability to easily link to and comment on friends’ blogs) with an expanded platform for self-expression. At this point, most traditional media companies have incorporated blogs, Twitter, and other social media as a way to allow their reporters to update instantly and often. This form of media convergence, discussed in detail in Section 11.3 of this chapter, is now a necessary part of doing business.

There are many other types of social media out there, many of which can be called to mind with a single name: YouTube (video sharing), Wikipedia (open-source encyclopedia composed of “wikis” editable by any user), Flickr (photo sharing), and Digg (content sharing). Traditional media outlets have begun referring to these social media services and others like them as “Web 2.0.” Web 2.0 is not a new version of the web; rather, the term is a reference to the increased focus on user-generated content and social interaction on the web, as well as the evolution of online tools to facilitate that focus. Instead of relying on professional reporters to get information about a protest in Iran, a person could just search for “Iran” on Twitter and likely end up with hundreds of tweets linking to everything from blogs to CNN.com to YouTube videos from Iranian citizens themselves. In addition, many of these tweets may actually be instant updates from people using Twitter in Iran. This allows people to receive information straight from the source, without being filtered through news organizations or censored by governments.

3.2.2 Going Viral

In 2009, Susan Boyle, an unemployed middle-aged Scottish woman, appeared on *Britain’s Got Talent* and sang “I Dreamed a Dream” from the musical *Les Misérables*, becoming an international star almost overnight. It was not her performance itself that catapulted her to fame and sent her subsequently released album to the top of the UK Billboard charts and kept it there for 6 weeks. What did it was a YouTube video of her performance, viewed by 87,000,000 people and counting. BritainsSoTalented, “Susan Boyle - Singer - Britains Got Talent 2009,” 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lp0IWv8QZY>.



Figure 11.5 Susan Boyle turned from a successful television contestant into an international celebrity when the YouTube video of her performance went viral.

Media that is spread from person to person when, for example, a friend sends you a link saying “You’ve got to see this!” is said to have “gone viral.” Marketing and advertising agencies have deemed advertising that makes use of this phenomenon as “viral marketing.” Yet many YouTube sensations have not come from large marketing firms. For instance, the four-piece pop-punk band OK Go filmed a music video on a tiny budget for their song “Here It Goes Again” and released it exclusively on YouTube in 2006. Featuring a choreographed dance done on eight separate treadmills, the video quickly became a viral sensation and, as of May 2011, has over 7,265,825 views. The video helped OK Go attract millions of new fans and earned them a Grammy award in 2007, making it one of the most notable successes of viral Internet marketing. Viral marketing is, however, notoriously unpredictable and is liable to spawn remixes, spin-offs, and spoofs that can dilute or damage the messages that marketers intend to spread. Yet, when it is successful, viral marketing can reach millions of people for very little money and can even make it into the mainstream news.

Recent successes and failures in viral marketing demonstrate how difficult it is for marketers to control their message as it is unleashed virally. In 2007, the band Radiohead released their album *In Rainbows* online, allowing fans to download it for any amount of money they chose—including for free. Despite practically giving the album away, the digital release of *In Rainbows* still pulled in more money than Radiohead’s previous album, *Hail to the Thief*, while the band simultaneously sold a huge number of \$80 collector editions and still sold physical CDs months after the digital release became available. *New Musical Express*, “Radiohead Reveal How Successful ‘In Rainbows’ Download Really Was,” October 15, 2008, <http://www.nme.com/news/radiohead/40444>. In contrast, the food giant Healthy Choice enlisted Classymommy.com blogger Colleen Padilla to write a sponsored review of its product, leading to a featured *New York Times* article on the blogger (not the product), which gave the product only a passing mention. Pradnya Joshi, “Approval by a Blogger May Please a Sponsor,” *New York Times*, July 12, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/13/technology/internet/13blog.html>. Often, a successfully marketed product will reach some people through the Internet and then break through into the mainstream media. Yet as the article about Padilla shows, sometimes the person writing about the product overshadows the product itself.

Not all viral media is marketing, however. In 2007, someone posted a link to a new trailer for *Grand Theft Auto IV* on the video games message board of the web forum 4chan.org. When users followed the link, they were greeted not with a video game trailer but with Rick Astley singing his 1987 hit “Never Gonna Give You Up.” This technique—redirecting someone to that particular music video—became known as Rickrolling and quickly became one of the most well-known Internet memes of all time. *Fox News*, “The Biggest Little Internet Hoax on Wheels Hits Mainstream,” April 22, 2008, www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,352010,00.html. An Internet meme is a concept that quickly replicates itself throughout the Internet, and it is often nonsensical and absurd. Another meme, “Lolcats,” consists of misspelled captions—“I can has cheezburger?” is a classic example—over pictures of cats. Often, these memes take on a metatextual quality, such as the meme “Milhouse is not a meme,” in which the character Milhouse (from the television show *The Simpsons*) is told that he is not a meme. Chronicling memes is notoriously difficult, because they typically spring into existence seemingly overnight, propagate rapidly, and disappear before ever making it onto the radar of mainstream media—or even the mainstream Internet user.

3.2.3 Benefits and Problems of Social Media

Social media allows an unprecedented volume of personal, informal communication in real time from anywhere in the world. It allows users to keep in touch with friends on other continents, yet keeps the conversation as casual as a Facebook wall post. In addition, blogs allow us to gauge a wide variety of opinions and have given “breaking news” a whole new meaning. Now, news can be distributed through many major outlets almost instantaneously, and different perspectives on any one event can be aired concurrently. In addition, news organizations can harness bloggers as sources of real-time news, in effect outsourcing some of their news-gathering efforts to bystanders on the scene. This practice of harnessing the efforts of several individuals online to solve a problem is known as crowdsourcing.

The downside of the seemingly infinite breadth of online information is that there is often not much depth to the coverage of any given topic. The superficiality of information on the Internet is a common gripe among many journalists who are now rushed to file news reports several times a day in an effort to complete with the “blogosphere,” or the crowd of bloggers who post both original news stories and aggregate previously published news from other sources. Whereas traditional print organizations at least had the “luxury” of the daily print deadline, now journalists are expected to blog or tweet every story and file reports with little or no analysis, often without adequate time to confirm the reliability of their sources. Ken Auletta, “Non-Stop News,” *Annals of Communications*, *New Yorker*, January 25, 2010, http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/01/25/100125fa_fact_auletta.

Additionally, news aggregators like Google News profit from linking to journalists’ stories at major newspapers and selling advertising, but these profits are not shared with the news organizations and journalists who created the stories. It is often difficult for journalists to keep up with the immediacy of the nonstop news cycle, and with revenues for their efforts being diverted to news aggregators, journalists and news organizations increasingly lack the resources to keep up this fast pace. Twitter presents a similar problem: Instead of getting news from a specific newspaper, many people simply read the articles that are linked from a Twitter feed. As a result, the news cycle leaves journalists no time for analysis or cross-examination. Increasingly, they will simply report, for example, on what a politician or public relations representative says without following up on these comments or fact-checking them. This further shortens the news cycle and makes it much easier for journalists to be exploited as the mouthpieces of propaganda.

Consequently, the very presence of blogs and their seeming importance even among mainstream media has made some critics wary. Internet entrepreneur Andrew Keen is one of these people, and his book *The Cult of the Amateur* follows up on the famous thought experiment suggesting that infinite monkeys, given infinite typewriters, will one day randomly produce a great work of literature: Proposed by T. H. Huxley (the father of Aldous Huxley), this thought experiment suggests that infinite monkeys given infinite typewriters would, given infinite time, eventually write *Hamlet*. “In our Web 2.0 world, the typewriters aren’t quite typewriters, but rather networked personal computers, and the monkeys aren’t quite monkeys, but rather Internet users.” Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet Is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). Keen also suggests that the Internet is really just a case of my-word-against-yours, where bloggers are not required to back up their arguments with credible sources. “These days, kids can’t tell the difference between credible news by objective professional journalists and what they read on [a random website].” Andrew Keen, *The Cult of the Amateur: How Today’s Internet Is Killing Our Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2007). Follow Keen on Twitter: twitter.com/ajkeen. Commentators like Keen worry that this trend will lead to young people’s inability to distinguish credible information from a mass of sources, eventually leading to a sharp decrease in credible sources of information.

For defenders of the Internet, this argument seems a bit overwrought: “A legitimate interest in the possible effects of significant technological change in our daily lives can inadvertently dovetail seamlessly into a ‘kids these days’ curmudgeonly sense of generational degeneration, which is hardly new.” Greg Downey, “Is Facebook Rotting Our Children’s Brains?” [Neuroanthropology.net](http://neuroanthropology.net), March 2, 2009, <http://neuroanthropology.net/2009/03/02/is-facebook-rotting-our-childrens-brains/>. Greg Downey, who runs the collaborative blog Neuroanthropology, says that fear of kids on the Internet—and on social media in particular—can slip into “a ‘one-paranoia-fits-all’ approach to technological change.” For the argument that online experiences are “devoid of cohesive narrative and long-term significance,” Downey offers that, on the contrary, “far from evacuating narrative, some social networking sites might be said to cause users to ‘narrativize’ their experience, engaging with everyday life already with an eye toward how they will represent it on their personal pages.”

Another argument in favor of social media defies the warning that time spent on social networking sites is destroying the social skills of young people. “The debasement of the word ‘friend’ by [Facebook’s] use of it should not make us assume that users can’t tell the difference between friends and Facebook ‘friends,’” writes Downey. On the contrary, social networks (like the Usenet of the past) can even provide a place for people with more obscure interests to meet one another and share commonalities. In addition, marketing through social media is completely free—making it a valuable tool for small businesses with tight marketing budgets. A community theater can invite all of its “fans” to a new play for less money than putting an ad in the newspaper, and this direct invitation is far more personal and specific. Many people see services like Twitter, with its “followers,” as more semantically appropriate than the “friends” found on Facebook and MySpace, and because of this Twitter has, in many ways, changed yet again the way social media is conceived. Rather than connecting with “friends,” Twitter allows social media to be purely a source of information, thereby making it far more appealing to adults. In addition, while 140 characters may seem like a constraint to some, it can be remarkably useful to the time-strapped user looking to catch up on recent news.

Social media’s detractors also point to the sheer banality of much of the conversation on the Internet. Again, Downey keeps this in perspective: “The banality of most conversation is also pretty frustrating,” he says. Downey suggests that many of the young people using social networking tools see them as just another aspect of communication. However, Downey warns that online bullying has the potential to pervade larger social networks while shielding perpetrators through anonymity.

Another downside of many of the Internet’s segmented communities is that users tend to be exposed only to information they are interested in and opinions they agree with. This lack of exposure to novel ideas and contrary opinions can create or reinforce a lack of understanding among people with different beliefs, and make political and social compromise more difficult to come by.

While the situation may not be as dire as Keen suggests in his book, there are clearly some important arguments to consider regarding the effects of the web and social media in particular. The main concerns come down to two things: the possibility that the volume of amateur, user-generated content online is overshadowing better-researched sources, and the questionable ability of users to tell the difference between the two.

3.2.4 Education, the Internet, and Social Media

Although Facebook began at Harvard University and quickly became popular among the Ivy League colleges, the social network has since been lambasted as a distraction for students. Instead of studying, the argument claims, students will sit in the library and browse Facebook, messaging their friends and getting nothing done. Two doctoral candidates, Aryn Karpinski (Ohio State University) and Adam Duberstein (Ohio Dominican University), studied the effects of Facebook use on college students and found that students who use Facebook generally receive a full grade lower—a half point on the GPA scale—than students who do not. Anita Hamilton, “What Facebook Users Share: Lower Grades,” *Time*, April 14, 2009, www.time.com/time/business/article/0,8599,1891111,00.html. Correlation does not imply causation, though, as Karpinski said that Facebook users may just be “prone to distraction.”

On the other hand, students’ access to technology and the Internet may allow them to pursue their education to a greater degree than they could otherwise. At a school in Arizona, students are issued laptops instead of textbooks, and some of their school buses have Wi-Fi Internet access. As a result, bus rides, including the long trips that are often a requirement of high school sports, are spent studying. Of course, the students had laptops long before their bus rides were connected to the Internet, but the Wi-Fi technology has “transformed what was often a boisterous bus ride into a rolling study hall.” Sam Dillon, “Wi-Fi Turns Rowdy Bus Into Rolling Study Hall,” *New York Times*, February 11, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/12/education/12bus.html>. Even

though not all students studied all the time, enabling students to work on bus rides fulfilled the school's goal of extending the educational hours beyond the usual 8 to 3.

3.2.5 Privacy Issues With Social Networking

Social networking provides unprecedented ways to keep in touch with friends, but that ability can sometimes be a double-edged sword. Users can update friends with every latest achievement—“[your name here] just won three straight games of solitaire!”—but may also unwittingly be updating bosses and others from whom particular bits of information should be hidden.

The shrinking of privacy online has been rapidly exacerbated by social networks, and for a surprising reason: conscious decisions made by participants. Putting personal information online—even if it is set to be viewed by only select friends—has become fairly standard. Dr. Kieron O'Hara studies privacy in social media and calls this era “intimacy 2.0,” Zoe Kleinman, “How Online Life Distorts Privacy Rights for All,” *BBC News*, January 8, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/8446649.stm>. a riff on the buzzword “Web 2.0.” One of O'Hara's arguments is that legal issues of privacy are based on what is called a “reasonable standard.” According to O'Hara, the excessive sharing of personal information on the Internet by *some* constitutes an offense to the privacy of *all*, because it lowers the “reasonable standard” that can be legally enforced. In other words, as cultural tendencies toward privacy degrade on the Internet, it affects not only the privacy of those who choose to share their information, but also the privacy of those who do not.

Privacy Settings on Facebook

With over 500 million users, it is no surprise that Facebook is one of the upcoming battlegrounds for privacy on the Internet. When Facebook updated its privacy settings in 2009 for these people, “privacy groups including the American Civil Liberties Union ... [called] the developments ‘flawed’ and ‘worrisome,’” reported *The Guardian* in late 2009. Bobbie Johnson, “Facebook Privacy Change Angers Campaigners,” *Guardian* (London), December 10, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2009/dec/10/facebook-privacy>.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, discusses privacy issues on a regular basis in forums ranging from his official Facebook blog to conferences. At the Crunchies Awards in San Francisco in early 2010, Zuckerberg claimed that privacy was no longer a “social norm.” Bobbie Johnson, “Privacy No Longer a Social Norm, Says Facebook Founder,” *Guardian* (London), January 11, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2010/jan/11/facebook-privacy>. This statement follows from his company's late-2009 decision to make public information sharing the default setting on Facebook. Whereas users were previously able to restrict public access to basic profile information like their names and friends, the new settings make this information publicly available with no option to make it private. Although Facebook publicly announced the changes, many outraged users first learned of the updates to the default privacy settings when they discovered—too late—that they had inadvertently broadcast private information. Facebook argues that the added complexity of the privacy settings gives users more control over their information. However, opponents counter that adding more complex privacy controls while simultaneously making public sharing the default setting for those controls is a blatant ploy to push casual users into sharing more of their information publicly—information that Facebook will then use to offer more targeted advertising. Kevin Bankston, “Facebook's New Privacy Changes: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly,” *Deeplinks Blog*, Electronic Frontier Foundation, December 9, 2009, <http://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2009/12/facebooks-new-privacy-changes-good-bad-and-ugly>.

In response to the privacy policy, many users have formed their own grassroots protest groups within Facebook. In response to critiques, Facebook changed its privacy policy again in May 2010 with three primary changes. First, privacy controls are simpler. Instead of various controls on multiple pages, there is now one main control users can use to determine who can see their information. Second, Facebook made less information publicly available. Public information is now limited to basic information, such as a user's name and profile picture. Finally, it is now easier to block applications and third-party websites from accessing user information. Maggie Lake, “Facebook's privacy changes,” *CNN*, June 2, 2010, <http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/tech/2010/05/27/lake.facebook.pr>.

Similar to the Facebook controversy, Google's social networking Gmail add-on called Buzz automatically signed up Gmail users to “follow” the most emailed Gmail users in their address book. Because all of these lists were public by default, users' most emailed contacts were made available for anyone to see. This was especially alarming for people like journalists who potentially had confidential sources exposed to a public audience. However, even though this mistake—which Google quickly

corrected—created a lot of controversy around Buzz, it did not stop users from creating over 9 million posts in the first 2 days of the service. Todd Jackson, “Millions of Buzz users, and improvements based on your feedback,” *Official Gmail Blog*, February 11, 2010, <http://gmailblog.blogspot.com/2010/02/millions-of-buzz-users-and-improvements.html>. Google’s integration of Buzz into its Gmail service may have been upsetting to users not accustomed to the pitfalls of social networking, but Google’s misstep has not discouraged millions of others from trying the service, perhaps due to their experience dealing with Facebook’s ongoing issues with privacy infringement.

For example, Facebook’s old privacy settings integrated a collection of applications (written by third-party developers) that included everything from “Which *American Idol* Contestant Are You?” to an “Honesty Box” that allows friends to send anonymous criticism. “Allowing Honesty Box access will let it pull your profile information, photos, your friends’ info, and other content that it requires to work,” reads the disclaimer on the application installation page. The ACLU drew particular attention to the “app gap” that allowed “any quiz or application run by you to access information about you and your friends.” Nicole Ozer, “Facebook Privacy in Transition - But Where Is It Heading?” ACLU of Northern California, December 9, 2009, www.aclunc.org/issues/technology/blog/facebook_privacy_in_transition_-_but_where_is_it_heading.shtml. In other words, merely using someone else’s Honesty Box gave the program information about your “religion, sexual orientation, political affiliation, pictures, and groups.” Nicole Ozer, “Facebook Privacy in Transition - But Where Is It Heading?” ACLU of Northern California, December 9, 2009, www.aclunc.org/issues/technology/blog/facebook_privacy_in_transition_-_but_where_is_it_heading.shtml. There are many reasons that unrelated applications may want to collect this information, but one of the most prominent is, by now, a very old story: selling products. The more information a marketer has, the better he or she can target a message, and the more likely it is that the recipient will buy something.



Figure 11.6 Zynga, one of the top social game developers on Facebook, created the game *FarmVille*. Because *FarmVille* is ad-supported and gives users the option to purchase Farmville virtual currency with actual money, the game is free and accessible for everyone to play.

3.2.6 Social Media's Effect on Commerce

Social media on the Internet has been around for a while, and it has always been of some interest to marketers. The ability to target advertising based on demographic information given willingly to the service—age, political preference, gender, and location—allows marketers to target advertising extremely efficiently. However, by the time Facebook's population passed the 350-million mark, marketers were scrambling to harness social media. The increasingly difficult-to-reach younger demographic has been rejecting radios for Apple's iPod mobile digital devices and television for YouTube. Increasingly, marketers are turning to social networks as a way to reach these consumers. Culturally, these developments indicate a mistrust among consumers of traditional marketing techniques; marketers must now use new and more personalized ways of reaching consumers if they are going to sell their products.

The attempts of marketers to harness the viral spread of media on the Internet have already been discussed earlier in the chapter. Marketers try to determine the trend of things “going viral,” with the goal of getting millions of YouTube views; becoming a hot topic on Google Trends, a website that measures the most frequently searched topics on the web; or even just being the subject of a post on a well-known blog. For example, Procter & Gamble sent free samples of its Swiffer dust mop to stay-at-home-mom bloggers with a large online audience. And in 2008, the movie *College* (or *College: The Movie*) used its tagline “Best.Weekend.Ever.” as the prompt for a YouTube video contest. Contestants were invited to submit videos of their best college

weekend ever, and the winner received a monetary prize. Jon Hickey, “Best Weekend Ever,” 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pldG8MdEIOA>.

What these two instances of marketing have in common is that they approach people who are already doing something they enjoy doing—blogging or making movies—and give them a relatively small amount of compensation for providing advertising. This differs from methods of traditional advertising because marketers seek to bridge a credibility gap with consumers. Marketers have been doing this for ages—long before breakfast cereal slogans like “Kid Tested, Mother Approved” or “Mikey likes it” ever hit the airwaves. The difference is that now the people pushing the products can be friends or family members, all via social networks.

For instance, in 2007, a program called Beacon was launched as part of Facebook. With Beacon, a Facebook user is confronted with the option to “share” an online purchase from partnering sites. For example, a user might buy a book from [Amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) and check the corresponding “share” box in the checkout process, and all of his or her friends will receive a message notifying them that this person purchased and recommends this particular product. Explaining the reason for this shift in a *New York Times* article, Mark Zuckerberg said, “Nothing influences a person more than a trusted friend.” Louise Story, “Facebook Is Marketing Your Brand Preferences (With Your Permission),” *New York Times*, November 7, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/07/technology/07adco.html>. However, many Facebook users did not want their purchasing information shared with other Facebookers, and the service was shut down in 2009 and subsequently became the subject of a class action lawsuit. Facebook’s troubles with Beacon illustrate the thin line between taking advantage of the tremendous marketing potential of social media and violating the privacy of users.

Facebook’s questionable alliance with marketers through Beacon was driven by a need to create reliable revenue streams. One of the most crucial aspects of social media is the profitability factor. In the 1990s, theGlobe.com was one of the promising new startups, but almost as quickly, it went under due to lack of funds. The lesson of theGlobe.com has not gone unheeded by today’s social media services. For example, Twitter has sold access to its content to Google and Microsoft to make users’ tweets searchable for \$25 million.

Google’s Buzz is one of the most interesting services in this respect, because Google’s main business is advertising—and it is a highly successful business. Google’s search algorithms allow it to target advertising to a user’s specific tastes. As Google enters the social media world, its advertising capabilities will only be compounded as users reveal more information about themselves via Buzz. Although it does not seem that users choose their social media services based on how the services generate their revenue streams, the issue of privacy in social media is in large part an issue of how much information users are willing to share with advertisers. For example, using Google’s search engine, Buzz, Gmail, and Blogger give that single company an immense amount of information and a historically unsurpassed ability to market to specific groups. At this relatively early stage of the fledgling online social media business—both Twitter and Facebook only very recently turned a profit, so commerce has only recently come into play—it is impossible to say whether the commerce side of things will transform the way people use the services. If the uproar over Facebook’s Beacon is any lesson, however, the relationship between social media and advertising is ripe for controversy.

Social Media as a Tool for Social Change

The use of Facebook and Twitter in the recent political uprisings in the Middle East has brought to the fore the question whether social media can be an effective tool for social change.

On January 14, 2011, after month-long protests against fraud, economic crisis, and lack of political freedom, the Tunisian public ousted President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. Soon after the Tunisian rebellion, the Egyptian public expelled President Hosni Mubarak, who had ruled the country for 30 years. Nearly immediately, other Middle Eastern countries such as Algeria, Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain also erupted against their oppressive governments in the hopes of obtaining political freedom. Grace Gamba, “Facebook Topples Governments in Middle East,” *Brimstone Online*, March 18, 2011, www.gshsbrimstone.com/news/2011/03/18/facebook-topples-governments-in-middle-east.

What is common among all these uprisings is the role played by social media. In nearly all of these countries, restrictions were imposed on the media and government resistance was brutally discouraged. Peter Beaumont, “Can Social Networking Overthrow a Government?” *Morning Herald* (Sydney), February 25, 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/can-social-networking-overthrow-a-government-20110225-1b7u6.html>. This seems to have inspired the entire Middle East to organize online to rebel against tyrannical rule. Chris Taylor, “Why Not Call It a Facebook Revolution?” *CNN*, February

24, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/TECH/social.media/02/24/facebook.revolution>. Protesters used social media not only to organize against their governments but also to share their struggles with the rest of the world. Grace Gamba, “Facebook Topples Governments in Middle East,” *Brimstone Online*, March 18, 2011, www.gshsbrimstone.com/news/2011/03/18/facebook-topples-governments-in-middle-east.

In Tunisia, protesters filled the streets by sharing information on Twitter. Chris Taylor, “Why Not Call It a Facebook Revolution?” *CNN*, February 24, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/TECH/social.media/02/24/facebook.revolution>. Egypt’s protests were organized on Facebook pages. Details of the demonstrations were circulated by both Facebook and Twitter. Email was used to distribute the activists’ guide to challenging the regime. Peter Beaumont, “Can Social Networking Overthrow a Government?” *Morning Herald* (Sydney), February 25, 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/can-social-networking-outhrow-a-government-20110225-1b7u6.html>. Libyan dissenters too spread the word about their demonstrations similarly. Chris Taylor, “Why Not Call It a Facebook Revolution?” *CNN*, February 24, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/TECH/social.media/02/24/facebook.revolution>.

Owing to the role played by Twitter and Facebook in helping protesters organize and communicate with each other, many have termed these rebellions as “Twitter Revolutions.” Evgeny Morozov, “How Much Did Social Media Contribute to Revolution in the Middle East?” *Bookforum*, April/May 2011, www.bookforum.com/inprint/018_01/7222 or “Facebook Revolutions.” Eric Davis, “Social Media: A Force for Political Change in Egypt,” April 13, 2011, <http://new-middle-east.blogspot.com/2011/04/social-media-force-for-political-change.html>. and have credited social media for helping to bring down these regimes. Eleanor Beardsley, “Social Media Gets Credit for Tunisian Overthrow,” *NPR*, January 16, 2011, <http://www.npr.org/2011/01/16/132975274/Social-Media-Gets-Credit-For-Tunisian-Overthrow>.

During the unrest, social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter helped protesters share information by communicating ideas continuously and instantaneously. Users took advantage of these unrestricted vehicles to share the most graphic details and images of the attacks on protesters, and to rally demonstrators. Peter Beaumont, “Can Social Networking Overthrow a Government?” *Morning Herald* (Sydney), February 25, 2011, <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/can-social-networking-outhrow-a-government-20110225-1b7u6.html>. In other words, use of social media was about the ability to communicate across borders and barriers. It gave common people a voice and an opportunity to express their opinions.

Critics of social media, however, say that those calling the Middle East movements Facebook or Twitter revolutions are not giving credit where it is due. Alex Villarreal, “Social Media A Critical Tool for Middle East Protesters,” *Voice of America*, March 1, 2011, www.voanews.com/english/news/middle-east/Social-Media-a-Critical-Tool-for-Middle-East-Protesters-117202583.html. It is true that social media provided vital assistance during the unrest in the Middle East. But technology alone could not have brought about the revolutions. The resolve of the people to bring about change was most important, and this fact should be recognized, say the critics. Chris Taylor, “Why Not Call It a Facebook Revolution?” *CNN*, February 24, 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/TECH/social.media/02/24/facebook.revolution>.

Key Takeaways

- Social networking sites often encompass many aspects of other social media. For example, Facebook began as a collection of profile pictures with very little information, but soon expanded to include photo albums (like Flickr) and micro-blogging (like Twitter). Other sites, like MySpace, emphasize connections to music and customizable pages, catering to a younger demographic. LinkedIn specifically caters to a professional demographic by allowing only certain kinds of information that is professionally relevant.
- Blogs speed the flow of information around the Internet and provide a critical way for nonprofessionals with adequate time to investigate sources and news stories without the necessary platform of a well-known publication. On the other hand, they can lead to an “echo chamber” effect, where they simply repeat one another and add nothing new. Often, the analysis is wide ranging, but it can also be shallow and lack the depth and knowledge of good critical journalism.
- Facebook has been the leader in privacy-related controversy, with its seemingly constant issues with privacy settings. One of the critical things to keep in mind is that as more people become comfortable with more information out in the open, the “reasonable standard” of privacy is lowered. This affects even people who would rather keep more things private.

- Social networking allows marketers to reach consumers directly and to know more about each specific consumer than ever before. Search algorithms allow marketers to place advertisements in areas that get the most traffic from targeted consumers. Whereas putting an ad on TV reaches all demographics, online advertisements can now be targeted specifically to different groups.

? Exercise 3.2.1

1. Draw a Venn diagram of two social networking sites mentioned in this chapter. Sign up for both of them (if you're not signed up already) and make a list of their features and their interfaces. How do they differ? How are they the same?
2. Write a few sentences about how a marketer might use these tools to reach different demographics.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4.1: New Media

4.2: Online Journalism Redefines News

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Learning Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What are the four ways the new media are changing the relationship between communication on the one hand and government and politics on the other?
2. What is WikiLeaks.org?
3. What limits the ability of the new media to improve citizen education and enhance public life?
4. What is the political potential of the new media?

The early 1980s saw the development of what we call the new media: new technologies and old technologies in new combinations. They are muddying if not eliminating the differences between media. On the iPad, newspapers, television, and radio stations look similar: they all have text, pictures, video, and links.

Increasingly, Americans, particularly students, are obtaining information on tablets and from websites, blogs, discussion boards, video-sharing sites, such as YouTube, and social networking sites, like Facebook, podcasts, and Twitter. And of course, there is the marvel of Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia to which so many people (four hundred million every month) go to for useful, if not always reliable, information.

4.1.1 Changing Relationships

New media are changing the relationship between communication and government and politics in four significant ways.

4.1.2 Making More Information Available and Accessible

Julian Paul Assange founded WikiLeaks.org in 2007 to expose the secrets of governments, corporations, and other institutions. In 2010 he released a classified video showing a US helicopter killing civilians, including two journalists, in Baghdad—an edited version was viewed several million times on YouTube (Khatchadourian, 2010). He has since released thousands of intelligence and military field reports from the war in Afghanistan and from the front lines of the conflict in Iraq.

Assange followed up in November 2010 with a dump of classified cables sent by US diplomats from their embassies during the last three years. The cables detailed the diplomats' dealings with and honest assessments of both the foreign countries where they were stationed and their leaders, revealing the reality beneath the rhetoric: that Saudi Arabia has urged that Iran be bombed, that Shell dominates the government of Nigeria, that China launched a cyber attack on Google, and that the US State Department urged its employees to collect biometrical information on foreign diplomats serving at the United Nations.

WikiLeaks released the material to selected leading newspapers in the United States (*New York Times*), the United Kingdom (*Guardian*), and elsewhere, deferring to the journalists to decide which ones were news, which could be made public, and whether to redact names from them. Nonetheless, their release could damage the careers of some US diplomats and disclose the names of informants, thereby endangering them. The cables could be subject to foreign governments' and private companies' data-mining and pattern-analysis programs. Consequently, the US Justice and Defense Departments and other organizations tried to stop Assange, to avoid further leaks, and to punish the leakers.

News organizations, with their legitimacy and experienced journalists, have gone online. They often add details and links missing from their broadcast or published versions of their stories. Their sophisticated technology keeps their sites fresh with the latest news, photos, and real-time audio and video. In February 2011, Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation announced the arrival of *The Daily*, a general-interest publication for tablet computers. It will cost ninety-nine cents weekly or forty dollars for a year (Peters & Stelter, 2011).

Journalists incorporate the Internet into their reporting. They read the sites of other news organizations, get story ideas, background information, check facts, search for and receive press releases, and download data.

The nonprofit investigative site [Pro-Publica](#)—which has exposed the involvement of doctors in torture, the contamination of drinking water through gas drilling, and other outrages—is generating and sharing content with many print publications that have cut back their investigative reporting.

[Talking Points Memo](#) was primarily responsible for tenacious investigative journalism, pursuing and publicizing the firing of eight US attorneys by the Bush administration's Justice Department. The result was a scandal that sparked interest by the mainstream media and led to the resignation of President Bush's attorney general, Alberto Gonzales, in 2008. The ideologically conservative [Drudge Report](#) came to fame when Matt Drudge used his web portal to spread the latest news and rumors about the relationship between President Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky. The site is now looked to by television producers, radio talk-show hosts, and reporters, for scoops, the latest leaks, gossip, and innuendo.

[Andrew Breitbart](#), a former colleague of Matt Drudge, founded his site in 2005. It aggregates news from the wire services and is viewed by an average of 2.4 million people monthly. He is also responsible for the websites Big Hollywood, Big Government, and Big Journalism, which provide some original reporting and commentary from a conservative perspective by unpaid bloggers, as well as references to articles on other sites.

Breitbart made a splash with videos posted on Big Government in September 2009 regarding ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now). Since 2006, conservatives had attacked ACORN, accusing it of voter fraud. This became the dominant frame and set the agenda for media coverage of the organization. Now the hidden-camera, heavily edited footage (the complete original video footage has never been fully disclosed) showed ACORN employees offering advice to a man and woman, who were posing as a pimp and a prostitute, proposing to bring underage Salvadoran girls into the United States to be sexually enslaved. The footage became a top story on the *Glenn Beck Show*, the rest of Fox News, and conservative talk radio. In December 2009, the Congressional Research Service issued a report exonerating ACORN of any wrongdoing. A few months later, ACORN went out of business (Dreier & Martin, 2010).

4.1.3 Narrowcasting

The new media can aim at more discrete, specialized audiences, narrowcasting rather than broadcasting. Often controlled by individual communicators, their content is usually aimed at smaller and more socially, economically, and perhaps politically distinct audiences than the mass media. This fragmentation of the mass audience means that the old mass-media pursuit of lowest-common-denominator content may no longer be financially necessary or viable.

There are cable channels devoted to women, African Americans, and Hispanics, as well as for buffs of news, weather, history, and sports. DVDs and CDs enable the cheap reproduction of a wide range of films and recordings that no longer have to find a mass market to break even. Although the recording industry is selling fewer and fewer CDs and is phasing out music formats with small audiences (e.g., classical, jazz), artists can produce their own CDs and find a far-flung audience, particularly through web-based commerce such as Amazon.

Satellite radio is the fastest growing radio market. It uses technology that broadcasts a clear signal from space to receivers anywhere in the world. Providers XM and Sirius offer uninterrupted programming for a subscription fee. Listeners have hundreds of program options. Broadcast radio stations are no longer limited by the range of a signal across terrain but through the web can reach listeners who make up an audience that is less bounded by geography than by shared cultural, social, and political interests.

For people interested in government, politics, and public affairs, there are web magazines such as [Slate](#), [Salon](#), and [Politico](#) with its staff of established political reporters.

4.1.4 Creating Content

As major news organizations have gone online, they have hired technologically skilled young people. At first, these people would primarily reprocess content. Now they create it, as they know how to take advantage of the technology. Thanks to cell-phone cameras, webcams, and social networks, ordinary people can create, store, sort, share, and show digital videos. YouTube is the go-to website for finding obscure and topical streaming video clips. Home videos, remixes, and television excerpts are posted by users (also by the television networks). YouTube has millions of videos and daily viewers.

People can use video clips to hold politicians accountable by revealing their gaffes, showing the contradictions in their statements and behavior, and thereby exposing their dissembling, their exaggerations, and even their falsehoods. Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton had to say that she had misremembered when her claim that she had been under sniper fire at the airport during her 1996 visit to Bosnia as First Lady was refuted by videos shown on YouTube that attained millions of views.

People can become citizen journalists and create contents by reporting on subjects usually ignored by the news media. Examples include OneWorldTV's human rights and development site and short videos on subjects such as land expropriation in Kenya, gang reform in Ecuador, and [LiveLeak](#)'s coverage of executions in Saudi Arabia.

People can become citizen journalists as eyewitnesses to events. Examples of their reporting include the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in 2011, Hurricane Katrina that hit the US Gulf Coast in 2005, and the massacre of students at Virginia Tech University in 2006. They showed some of what happened and documented the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the authorities' responses. Mainstream media have incorporated citizen journalism into their news products. CNN's "[iReport](#)," in which "you take control of the news," encourages average people to submit stories with accompanying images. Reports span numerous topics, including candidates on the campaign and pet stories.

The [Free Press](#) now has a site called MediaFail where people can post egregious examples of media derelictions and failures.

4.1.5 Blogging

Blogs are online diaries whose authors post information, including ideas and opinions. Blogs may permit feedback from readers and provide hyperlinks to other online contents that may enrich the discussion. Many people blog; the most popular political blog sites, Instapundit and [DailyKos](#), claim over 75,000 visitors per day, but few are widely read. Nonetheless, there are thousands of political blogs on the web: the [Huffington Post](#), a news aggregator with some original material, claims more than eighteen hundred bloggers—none of them paid.

Blogging can be seen as a new form of journalism without deadlines or broadcast schedules. But it does not replace reporting. Most bloggers rely on material issued elsewhere for their information: domestic and foreign newspapers, government documents, academic papers, and other media.

Nonetheless, the "blogosphere" can hold public officials accountable by amplifying and spreading information, especially when many bloggers cover the same subject, a phenomenon known as "blogswarm." For example, Mississippi Republican senator Trent Lott, at a reception honoring his South Carolina colleague Strom Thurmond's hundredth birthday, spoke approvingly of the latter's prosegregationist 1948 presidential campaign: "When Strom Thurmond ran for president we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead we wouldn't have had all these problems over all of these years either." The journalists in attendance little noted his comment. Bloggers saw the quote in a story on ABC News's daily online comment "The Note." They highlighted and linked it to previous statements on racial issues by Thurmond and Lott. The bloggers' comments were picked up by the news media. As a result, Lott subsequently resigned as Senate Majority Leader.

Bloggers can hold the news media accountable. One important way is by challenging the media's framing of a story. For example, conservative bloggers criticize reporters for framing stories about abortion, gay rights, and religion from a liberal perspective.

Bloggers also challenge the media's stories themselves. On the *60 Minutes Wednesday* segment of September 8, 2005, anchor Dan Rather presented documents purportedly showing that President George W. Bush had received preferential treatment in joining the Texas Air National Guard in the early 1970s and thus avoided military service in Vietnam. The report was a scoop that had been rushed onto the air. Conservative Internet forums and bloggers immediately pointed out that, because of their format and typography, the documents were forged. The accusation quickly gained national attention by the news media and was soon corroborated. Rather's long career at CBS was ended sooner than he and the network had planned.

4.1.6 Limitations

The ability of new media to realize their potential and promise for improving citizen education and enhancing public life is limited in five ways.

First, political websites and bloggers generally lack the resources of the news media and the knowledge and expertise of journalists to cover and investigate government, politics, and public policies in depth. They react to rather than originate the news.

Second, the new media encourage people to expose themselves to contents (people and perspectives) they already agree with. The audience for Fox News is overwhelmingly Republican, while Democrats gravitate to MSNBC and Comedy Central. Liberals find stories that support their views on the Huffington Post, conservatives on the National Review Online. Liberal blogs link to other liberal blogs, conservative blogs to other conservative blogs.

Third, the new media are rife with muddle and nonsense, distortion and error. When the journalist Hunter S. Thompson died, an Internet site reported President Nixon's opinion that Thompson "represented the dark, venal and incurably violent side of the American character." In fact, Thompson said that about Nixon.

Worse, the new media are a fount of rumor, innuendo, invective, and lies. The Indian wire service Press Trust quoted an anonymous Indian provincial official stating that President Obama's official state visit to India would cost \$2 billion (\$200 million a day). The story was picked up by the Drudge Report, other online sites, and conservative talk-radio hosts such as Rush Limbaugh and Michael Savage. Glenn Beck presented the trip as a vacation accompanied by thirty-four warships and three thousand people. Congresswoman Michele Bachmann (R-MN) repeated the claim to Anderson Cooper on his CNN program. This inspired him to track it down, reveal its falsity, and show how it had been perpetuated (Friedman, 2010).

Even worse, the new media can promote and express anger, hatred, rage, and fanaticism. When American journalist Daniel Pearl was beheaded by his Al Qaeda captors in Pakistan in May 2002, the action was videotaped and distributed over the Internet on a grainy video titled "The Slaughter of the Spy-Journalist, the Jew Daniel Pearl."^[1]

Fourth is the possibility of the new media falling increasingly under the control of media conglomerates and giant corporations. Google has purchased YouTube. This could eventually subject them to the same demands placed on the mass media: how to finance the production of content and make a profit. Indeed, advertising has become far more prevalent in and on the new media. Of course acquisitions don't always succeed: Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation bought and then sold MySpace after failing to make it a financial or social networking success.

Fifth, the new media are a threat to privacy. Google logs all the searches made on it and stores the information indefinitely. Relatedly, the new media tend to defer to government. AOL, Microsoft, and Yahoo, but not Google, have complied with requests from the US Justice Department for website addresses and search terms. Google in China omits links to sites that the Chinese government does not want its citizens to see.

In the United States there are Gawker and its network, including the gossip sites Jezebel and Deadspin. They have no compunctions about breaching people's privacy—even if it means violating journalistic norms by paying for information, as they did in the case of the sex diary written in the form of a thesis of a recent Duke University graduate and also a story concerning quarterback Brett Favre's sexual behavior.

4.1.7 Political Potential

Relatively few Internet users attend to politics or government or public policies (Hindman, 2008). Nonetheless, the new media are rife with political potential. They can convey a wide range of information and views. There are sites for people of every political persuasion interested in any policy issue (e.g., drugs, education, health, environment, immigration). These sites can encourage discussion and debate, stimulate political participation, raise funds, mobilize voters, and inspire civic engagement.

The new media allow politicians, political parties, interest and advocacy groups, as well as individuals to bypass the traditional media and reach the public. They can try to control their image by deciding what information to release and selecting congenial media through which to communicate it—to their benefit but not necessarily our enlightenment. Sarah Palin, for example, uses Twitter, Facebook, appearances on Fox News (the network paid for a television studio in her home), a reality television show, newspaper columns, and two best-selling books to communicate her message. She usually avoids appearing on shows whose hosts may be hostile to or even critical of her. (The belief that public figures, including Palin, personally write everything issued in their names is questionable; President Obama has admitted that he doesn't write his Twitter feeds).

The new media offer people the potential opportunity to transcend the mass media. As newspaper columnist Thomas L. Friedman wrote rather hyperbolically, "When everyone has a blog, a MySpace page or Facebook entry, everyone is a publisher. When everyone has a cell phone with a camera in it, everyone is a paparazzo. When everyone can upload video on YouTube, everyone is a filmmaker. When everyone is a publisher, paparazzo or filmmaker, everyone else is a public figure" (Friedman, 2007).

4.1.7.1 Key Takeaways

In this section we have seen how the new media are changing the relationship between communication on the one hand and government and politics on the other. They make more information than ever before accessible and available. They facilitate

narrowcasting, the creation of content, and blogging. Despite limitations on their ability to improve citizen education and enhance public life, the new media are rife with political potential, particularly for civic education (Levine, 2007).

4.1.8 Exercises

1. How do new media make it difficult for governments to keep secrets? What effect do you think that will have on politics?
2. How does blogging differ from traditional journalism? What are the advantages of blogging as a form of journalism? What are the disadvantages?
3. In what sense do new media make everyone potentially a journalist? Do you agree that this also makes everyone potentially a public figure?

Civic Education

You Can Be a Journalist

- The emerging communications system in the United States, with its heady mix of traditional mass media and new media, offers a startling array of opportunities for citizens to intervene and get something done in politics and government. The opportunities are especially rich for young people who are well versed in new technologies, and they are charting new paths in political discourse.
- Scoop08.com, the “first-ever daily national student newspaper,” was launched on November 4, 2007—a year before the presidential election. The goal of the paper was to bring a youthful focus to campaign news and political issues, as well as to cover topics and political personalities that escaped mainstream media attention. There were almost fifty beats covering aspects of the 2008 election including major and minor political parties, gender and sexuality, the environment, technology, and even sports.
- Reporters and editors came from over four hundred high schools and colleges nationwide. Their backgrounds were ethnically and socially diverse. All volunteers, students who wanted to become involved responded to an open invitation on the website’s homepage: “This is your newsroom—Get involved.” Scoop08’s web-based platform allowed its young reporters to file conventional stories as well as to post videos, blog entries, cartoons, and instant polls.
- The online newspaper was founded by coeditors Alexander Heffner, seventeen, a senior at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and Andrew Mangino, twenty, a junior at Yale University. The two met when they were interns on Senator Hillary Clinton’s Senate reelection campaign. With people aged eighteen to twenty-nine making up 25 percent of the 2008 electorate, Heffner and Magino wanted to provide a mechanism for generating student interest and activity during the election. “We noticed there was a void when it came to national, grassroots, student journalism that really could have an impact on issues of importance. This is an increasingly politically engaged generation that is able to network online and to work professionally, academically, and socially in this venue,” stated Heffner (Smith-Spark, 2007).
- Contributors to Scoop08 found the experience fulfilling. Hadley Nagel, a correspondent from Nightengale-Bamford School, stated, “If our generation is the future, we who write for Scoop08 will be shaping history.” A comment by Zoe Baker from Kennebunk High School reflected the ideals expressed by many of the young reporters: “Scoop08 has the opportunity to reassert journalistic integrity.”

4.1.9 References

Dreier, P. and Christopher R. Martin, “How ACORN Was Framed: Political Controversy and Media Agenda Setting,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 3 (September 2010): 761–92; the statement that the complete original video has “never been fully disclosed” is on p. 780.

Friedman, T. L., in “Too Good to Check,” his column in the *New York Times*, October 17, 2010, A27.

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Peters, J. W. and Brian Stelter, “News Corp Heralds Debut of The Daily, an iPad-Only Newspaper,” *New York Times*, February 3, 2011, B1 and 4.

Smith-Spark, L., “Young US Voters May Get Scoop in 2008,” *BBC News*, November 4, 2007.

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1. Mariane Pearl’s memoir of her husband, *A Mighty Heart* (New York: Scribner, 2004), was made into a film released in 2007. [↩](#)
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Learning Objectives

- Describe two ways in which online reporting may outperform traditional print reporting.
- Explain the greatest challenges newspapers face as they transition to online journalism.

The proliferation of online communication has had a profound effect on the newspaper industry. As individuals turn to the Internet to receive news for free, traditional newspapers struggle to remain competitive and hold onto their traditional readers. However, the Internet's appeal goes beyond free content. This section delves further into the Internet and its influence on the print industry. The Internet and its role in media are explored in greater detail in Chapter 11 of this textbook.

4.2.1 Competition From Blogs

Web logs, or blogs, have offered a new take on the traditional world of journalism. Blogs feature news and commentary entries from one or more authors. However, journalists differ on whether the act of writing a blog, commonly known as blogging, is, in fact, a form of journalism.

Indeed, many old-school reporters do not believe blogging ranks as formal journalism. Unlike journalists, bloggers are not required to support their work with credible sources. This means that stories published on blogs are often neither verified nor verifiable. As Jay Rosen, New York University journalism professor, writes, “Bloggers are speakers and writers of their own invention, at large in the public square. They’re *participating* in the great game of influence called public opinion.” Jay Rosen, “Brain Food for BloggerCon,” *PressThink* (blog), April 16, 2004, journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/we...n_prelude.html. Despite the blurry lines of what constitutes “true” journalism—and despite the fact that bloggers are not held to the same standards as journalists—many people still seek out blogs to learn about news. Thus, blogs have affected the news journalism industry. According to longtime print journalist and blogger Gina Chen, “blogging has changed journalism, but it is not journalism.” Gina Chen, “Is Blogging Journalism?” *Save the Media*, March 28, 2009, savethemedia.com/2009/03/28/i...ng-journalism/.

4.2.2 Advantages Over Print Media

Beyond the lack of accountability in blogging, blogs are free from the constraints of journalism in other ways that make them increasingly competitive with traditional print publications. Significantly, Internet publication allows writers to break news as soon as it occurs. Unlike a paper that publishes only once a day, the Internet is constantly accessible, and information is ready at the click of a mouse.

In 1998, the Internet flexed its rising journalistic muscle by breaking a story before any major print publication: the Bill Clinton/Monica Lewinsky scandal. The *Drudge Report*, an online news website that primarily consists of links to stories, first made the story public, claiming to have learned of the scandal only after *Newsweek* magazine failed to publish it. On January 18, 1998, the story broke online with the title “*Newsweek* Kills Story on White House Intern. Blockbuster Report: 23-year-old, Former White House Intern, Sex Relationship with President.” The report gave some details on the scandal, concluding the article with the phrase “The White House was busy checking the *Drudge Report* for details.” “Original Drudge Reports of Monica Lewinsky Scandal (January 17, 1998),” *AustralianPolitics.com*, australianpolitics.com/usa/cl...t/drudge.shtml. This act revealed the power of the Internet because of its superiority in timeliness, threatening the relevancy of slower newspapers and news magazines.

Print media also continuously struggle with space constraints, another limit that the Internet is spared. As newspapers contemplate making the transition from print to online editions, several editors see the positive effect of this particular issue. N. Ram, editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*, claims, “One clear benefit online editions can provide is the scope this gives for accommodating more and longer articles.... There need be no space constraints, as in the print edition.” S. Viswanathan, “Internet Media: Sky’s the Limit,” *Hindu*, March 28, 2010, <http://beta.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/article318231.ece>. With the endless writing space of the Internet, online writers have the freedom to explore topics more fully, to provide more detail, and to print interviews or other texts in their entirety—opportunities that many print journalists have longed for since newspapers first began publishing.

Online writing also provides a forum for amateurs to enter the professional realm of writing. With cost-cutting forcing newspapers to lay off writers, more and more would-be journalists are turning to the Internet to find ways to enter the field. Interestingly, the blogosphere has launched the careers of journalists who otherwise may never have pursued a career in journalism. For example,

blogger Molly Wizenberg founded the blog *Orangette* because she didn't know what to do with herself: "The only thing I knew was that, whatever I did, it had to involve food and writing." Nick Wyke, "Meet the Food Bloggers: Orangette," *Times* (London), May 26, 2009, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/life_and_style/food_and_drink/real_food/article6364590.ece. After *Orangette* became a successful food blog, Wizenberg transitioned into writing for a traditional media outlet: food magazine *Bon Appetit*.

4.2.3 Online Newspapers

With declining readership and increasing competition from blogs, most newspapers have embraced the culture shift and have moved to online journalism. For many papers, this has meant creating an online version of their printed paper that readers will have access to from any location, at all times of the day. By 2010, over 10,000 newspapers had gone online. But some smaller papers—particularly those in two-paper communities—have not only started websites but have also ceased publication of their printed papers entirely.

One such example is Seattle's *Post-Intelligencer*. In 2009, the newspaper stopped printing, "leaving the rival *Seattle Times* as the only big daily in town." David Folkenflik, "Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future," NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. As Steve Swartz, president of Hearst Newspapers and owner of the *Post-Intelligencer*, commented about the move to online-only printing, "Being the second newspaper in Seattle didn't work. We are very enthusiastic, however, about this experiment to create a digital-only business in Seattle with a robust community website at its core." David Folkenflik, "Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future," NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. For the *Post-Intelligencer*, the move meant a dramatic decrease in its number of staff journalists. The printed version of the paper employed 135 journalists, but the online version, *Seattlepi.com*, employs only 2 dozen. For *Seattlepi.com*, this shift has been doubly unusual because the online-only newspaper is not really like a traditional newspaper at all. As Swartz articulated, "Very few people come to our website and try to re-create the experience of reading a newspaper—in other words, spending a half-hour to 45 minutes and really reading most of the articles. We don't find people do that on the Web." David Folkenflik, "Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future," NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>. The online newspaper is, in reality, still trying to figure out what it is. Indeed, this is an uncomfortable position familiar to many online-only papers: trapped between the printed news world and the online world of blogs and unofficial websites.

During this transitional time for newspapers, many professional journalists are taking the opportunity to enter the blogosphere, the realm of bloggers on the Internet. Journalist bloggers, also known as beatbloggers, have begun to utilize blogs as "tool[s] to engage their readers, interact with them, use them as sources, crowdsource their ideas and invite them to contribute to the reporting process," says beatblogger Alana Taylor. Alana Taylor, "What It Takes to Be a Beatblogger," *BeatBlogging.org* (blog), March 5, 2009, beatblogging.org/2009/03/05/w...a-beatblogger/. As beatblogging grows, online newspapers are harnessing the popularity of this new phenomenon and taking advantage of the resources provided by the vast Internet audience through crowdsourcing (outsourcing problem solving to a large group of people, usually volunteers). Blogs are becoming an increasingly prominent feature on news websites, and nearly every major newspaper website displays a link to the paper's official blogs on its homepage. This subtle addition to the web pages reflects the print industry's desire to remain relevant in an increasingly online world.

Even as print newspapers are making the transformation to the digital world with greater or less success, Internet news sites that were never print papers have begun to make waves. Sites such as *The Huffington Post*, *The Daily Beast*, and the *Drudge Report* are growing in popularity. For example, *The Huffington Post* displays the phrase "The Internet Newspaper: News, Blogs, Video, Community" as its masthead, reiterating its role and focus in today's media-savvy world. *Huffington Post*, www.huffingtonpost.com/. In 2008, former *Vanity Fair* editor Tina Brown cofounded and began serving as editor-in-chief of *The Daily Beast*. On *The Daily Beast*'s website, Brown has noted its success: "I revel in the immediacy, the responsiveness, the real-time-ness. I used to be the impatient type. Now I'm the serene type. Because how can you be impatient when everything happens right now, instantly?" Tina Brown, "The Daily Beast Turns One," *Daily Beast*, October 5, 2009, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-a...urns-one/full/>.

Some newspapers are also making even more dramatic transformations to keep up with the changing online world. In 2006, large newspaper conglomerate GateHouse Media began publishing under a Creative Commons license, giving noncommercial users access to content according to the license's specifications. The company made the change to draw in additional online viewers and,

eventually, revenue for the newspapers. Writer at the Center for Citizen Media, Lisa Williams, explains in her article published by *PressThink.org*:

GateHouse's decision to CC license its content may be a response to the cut-and-paste world of weblogs, which frequently quote and point to newspaper stories. Making it easier—and legal—for bloggers to quote stories at length means that bloggers are pointing their audience at that newspaper. Getting a boost in traffic from weblogs may have an impact on online advertising revenue, and links from weblogs also have an impact on how high a site's pages appear in search results from search engines such as Google. Higher traffic, and higher search engine rankings build a site's ability to make money on online ads. Lisa Williams, "Newspaper Chain Goes Creative Commons: GateHouse Media Rolls CC Over 96 Newspaper Sites," *PressThink* (blog), December 15, 2006, journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/we...per_chain.html.

GateHouse Media's decision to alter its newspapers' licensing agreement to boost advertising online reflects the biggest challenge facing the modern online newspaper industry: profit. Despite shrinking print-newspaper readership and rising online readership, print revenue remains much greater than digital revenue because the online industry is still determining how to make online newspapers profitable. One article notes the following:

The positive news is that good newspapers like *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal* now provide better, richer, and more diverse content in their Internet editions.... The bad news is that the print media are yet to find a viable, let alone profitable, revenue model for their Internet journalism. S. Viswanathan, "Internet Media: Sky's the Limit," *Hindu*, March 28, 2010, <http://beta.thehindu.com/opinion/Readers-Editor/article318231.ece>.

The issue is not only that information on the Internet is free but also that advertising is far less expensive online. As National Public Radio (NPR) reports, "The online-only plan for newspapers remains an unproven financial model; there are great savings by scrapping printing and delivery costs, but even greater lost revenues, since advertisers pay far more money for print ads than online ads." David Folkenflik, "Newspapers Wade Into an Online-Only Future," NPR, March 20, 2009, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/s...ryId=102162128>.

Source of Newspaper Revenue

Print

Newsstand Sales, Subscriptions
and Advertising

Online

Advertising

Figure 4.11 Sources of Newspaper Revenue

Despite these challenges, newspapers both in print and online continue to seek new ways to provide the public with accurate, timely information. Newspapers have long been adapting to cultural paradigm shifts, and in the face of losing print newspapers altogether, the newspaper industry continues to reinvent itself to keep up with the digital world.

- Print newspapers face increasing challenges from online media, particularly amateur blogs and professional online news operations.
- Internet reporting outperforms traditional print journalism both with its ability to break news as it happens and through its lack of space limitations. Still, nonprofessional Internet news is not subject to checks for credibility, so some readers and journalists remain skeptical.
- As newspapers move to online journalism, they must determine how to make that model profitable. Most online newspapers do not require subscriptions, and advertising is significantly less expensive online than it is in print.

? Exercise 4.2.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Choose a topic on which to conduct research. Locate a blog, a print newspaper, and an online-only newspaper that have information about the topic.
2. What differences do you notice in style and in formatting?
3. Does one appeal to you over the others? Explain.
4. What advantages does each source have over the others? What disadvantages?
5. Consider the changes the print newspaper would need to make to become an online-only paper. What challenges would the print newspaper face in transitioning to an online medium?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 4.1

1. Which European technological advancement of the 1400s forever changed the print industry?
2. Which country's "weeklies" provided a stylistic format that many other papers followed?
3. In what ways did the penny paper transform the newspaper industry?
4. What is sensationalism and how did it become a prominent style in the journalism industry?

2. Questions for Section 4.2

1. What are some challenges of objective journalism?
2. What are the unique features of the inverted pyramid style of journalistic writing?
3. How does literary journalism differ from traditional journalism?
4. What are the differences between consensus journalism and conflict journalism?

3. Questions for Section 4.3

1. In what two ways do newspapers control information?
2. What are some of the defining features of watchdog journalism?
3. Using *USA Today* as a model, in what tangible ways has television affected the newspaper industry and styles of journalism?

4. Questions for Section 4.4

1. What are a few of the country's most prominent newspapers, and what distinguishes them from one another?
2. Name and briefly describe three technological advances that have affected newspaper readership.

5. Questions for Section 4.5

1. In what ways might online reporting benefit readers' access to information?
2. Why are print newspapers struggling as they transition to the online market?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. Have sensationalism or yellow journalism retained any role in modern journalism? How might these styles impact current trends in reporting?
2. Do a majority of today's newspapers use objective journalism or interpretive journalism? Why might papers tend to favor one style of journalism over another?
3. In what ways has watchdog journalism transformed the newspaper industry? What are the potential benefits and pitfalls of watchdog journalism?
4. Explore the challenges that have arisen due to the growing number of newspaper chains in the United States.
5. How has the Internet altered the way in which newspapers present news? How are print newspapers responding to the decline of subscribers and the rise of online readers?

📌 Career Connection

Although modern print newspapers increasingly face economic challenges and have reduced the number of journalists they have on staff, career opportunities still exist in newspaper journalism. Those desiring to enter the field may need to explore new ways of approaching journalism in a transforming industry.

Read the articles “Every Newspaper Journalist Should Start a Blog,” written by Scott Karp, found at <http://publishing2.com/2007/05/22/every-newspaper-journalist-should-start-a-blog/>, and “Writing the Freelance Newspaper Article,” by Cliff Hightower, at <http://www.fmwriters.com/Visionback/Issue32/Writefrenewspaper.htm>.

Think about these two articles as you answer the following questions.

1. What does Scott Karp mean when he says that a blog entails “embracing the power and accepting the responsibility of *being* a publisher”? What should you do on your blog to do just that?
2. According to Karp, what is “the fundamental law of the web”?
3. Karp lists two journalists who have shown opposition to his article. What are the criticisms or caveats to Karp’s main article that are discussed?
4. Describe the three suggestions that Cliff Hightower provides when thinking about a career as a freelance writer. How might you be able to begin incorporating those suggestions into your own writing?
5. What two texts does Hightower recommend as you embark on a career as a freelance writer?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

[5.1: Audiences and Audience Research](#)

[5.2: Researching Audiences](#)

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This section discusses the different ways we think about receivers, audiences, and users, and how communication and media scholars might approach thinking about and studying audiences. It is worth breaking these concepts down into separate components to try to understand them. However, these concepts are artificial constructs, and the line between receivers, users, and audiences is becoming increasingly soft and blurred and they may have faded in their usefulness.

When dealing with one-to-one or one-to-few communication, we usually use the label of receiver to describe those whom the message targets. As articulated in the transmission models of communication, a receiver can also be a sender, but for now, it's easiest to start with the simplest articulation of a receiver, where a receiver can be defined as anyone targeted for or taking in information or communication. Leaving the reality that receivers often become senders aside, we can still regard receivers as not merely passive sponges of information – they can interpret material, bring to bear their own experiences, and 'read' messages in a number of different ways.

In terms of information received, we can generally say that information is decoded in three ways. There is the **dominant** reading, where the message intended is the message received. There is a **negotiated** reading, where the receiver accepts some of the intended message, and rejects other parts of it. Finally, there are **oppositional** readings, where the reader completely rejects the message intended. And of course, there is also the possibility that the message is not received – through miscommunication or a failure to communicate. It is also worth remembering here that communication is never ideologically neutral.

All of this forms the core of Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model. Hall argued that any piece of information can be encoded in multiple ways, and every message has more than one meaning. We refer to this as the polysemy of messages – literally, the 'many meanings.' Therefore, communication is always subject to decisions made within the context and systems employed – meaning-making is not natural but cultural. There isn't such a thing as a 'right' way to read a message, only the preferred way within a particular context.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbc.ca/mediastudies101/?p=93>

16 Rude and Interesting Gestures around the World – Standard Youtube License (Video uploaded by SkyscannerLtd)

The cultural aspect and interpretation of a message shows in the different non-verbal signs described in the video above. The depend on national, thus cultural backgrounds and might have different meanings in other cultures or might simply not be understood. Also, each gesture would only make sense in a certain context.

When thinking about mass communication, and broadcasting to a large number of people (many-to-many communication), we need to ask whether or not an audience is just an aggregate of receivers. Is there anything special about an audience?

It's a surprisingly difficult question. A very basic view might see the audience merely as a group of people who are receiving the same message at the same time, whether it be a musical performance or a TV show. But the breadth of communicative options these days quickly exposes the problems with such a simple definition. If one person records a show on MySky™, another downloads the show off a torrent, another watches it when it is first broadcast on 'free-to-air' TV, and another buys the DVD, are they collectively still an audience? They're all receiving the same text, but in different modes and at different times.

We might instead try to think about audiences both as cultural constructs and as responses to particular media or texts. We can define audiences in terms of location (such as the spectators at a rugby game), by population demographics (for example, children), by medium or channel (such as television or Youtube), or by message content (political speeches or soap operas), as well as by time of transmission or reception.

How we perceive audiences has also changed over time, from passive to active to fragmented. We started off in pre-modern times thinking about the audience in terms of the public. Publics, such as those at agora and fora, were generally constrained in time, space and culture. That is, they tended to be in the same place, at the same time, with participants sharing similar values and culture. It wasn't until the rise of the media and mass communication that audiences started to become more dispersed and heterogeneous. It is this mass audience that is perhaps more relevant to media scholars.

The mass audience is an interesting phenomena, given how dispersed they are. For much of the 20th century, the mass audience was characterized by a lack of self-generated identity – only with a few rare texts, like certain bands, or shows or sports teams – did people share a common identity in belonging to that audience. For the most part, members of the mass audience, particularly the mediated mass audience, were dispersed across time, space, and culture. Furthermore, what identities they did have were classified by externally generated markers such as demographics, like age, gender (and perhaps most importantly in capitalist media markets,) economic profile.

This era of audience research was very much focused around marketing demographics. Leaving aside public service broadcasting for the moment, a lot of information captured about audiences, and indeed the language we used to describe audiences, came from marketers and program buyers, who determined which mass media texts made it into general circulation based on what kind of audience it would attract (children, housewives, retirees) and therefore what kind of advertising they could sell on it.

Is the idea of the audience still relevant for the 21st Century? A simple test might be to think about what you did last night? With an increasing plethora of channels, modes, and sources of information and entertainment, our existing notion of the mass audience is fractured more than ever.

While the audience still has some use as a concept, particularly as we define the demographics of our audience more tightly, a new concept has come to the fore in communication research. There are a few different labels given to similar concepts, so let's start with the idea of the user. A user has a number of definitions given the context, but to start with, we can define a user as an active agent who uses available tools to interact with information.

A user is of interest to us because they move through a number of different communicative positions simultaneously. They can be both senders and receivers, audiences and producers, engaged in interpersonal communication that is also public performance. Users form networks, and act as nodes which both pass on and reinterpret information taken in from multiple sources, often other users. Users interact with other users to form networks along which information is not only sent and received, but also modified and interpreted.

These messy networks quickly go beyond any simple, linear model that we might use for understanding audiences. The rise of the user in both the interpersonal and mass communication landscape has been enabled to a large extent by information communication technologies such as the internet and mobile phones. But a lot of the interplay between users that we've been seeing reflects other, small scale social networks, such as the pre-modern idea of the village. What has changed is the scale and speed of the network connections, and the idea of memory – an interpersonal network can subjectively remember things. In an electronic network, the exact words, content or message can often be recalled long after the interaction has ceased – a good demonstration of this is searching for yourself online (egosurfing) to find old posts and messages you had long forgotten.

As an aside, it is interesting to use the ritual view of communication as a lens through which to think about the social network of users as a group of communicators. If users can be both senders and receivers, produce and consume (and reproduce) texts, and always have, at least in theory, equal capacity of channel to play either sender or receiver, then the flow of cultural capital is not only sped up, it is also partially removed from the hands of capitalist content producers (i.e. those producing content to sell advertising around or for monetary gain). We're currently seeing the early shockwaves of this change playing out in the copyright battles of the TPPA, SOPA, PIPA, ACTA and s21a.)

Overall, audiences are a fascinatingly complex concept, and one we'll return to in the section on fandom. But now, it might be worth thinking how we approach audience research.

5.1.1 Discussion

1. Why has the internet changed the concept of audiences?
2. Find examples that state your theory.

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Audience studies have been around as long as there has been commercial mass media – producers needed to prove to potential advertisers that their message was received by a certain number (and later on, a certain type) of people. As such, audience research has ties to ideas about consumer culture. But as metrics and other ways of gathering information grew more sophisticated the demographics continued to be refined. For example, these are the [demographics that TVNZ currently keeps track of for its advertisers](#).

We can also investigate audiences from perspectives, rather than as mere commodities. For the mass media, a number of different tools are deployed by different groups – such as counting viewers to identify prime advertising space for advertisers. Focus groups are employed to see how the target demographic is receiving a particular text, and adjustments are made accordingly. In-depth research into a population, such as the bronies, attempts to understand the interplay between reception, consumption and community.

These methods have been refined throughout the history of mass media, however, new media presents new challenges. For example, modifications to existing methods, such as a media-use diary where audiences note their media consumption, has to cope with the challenges of a context where most people's media use hours exceed the hours in the day. This is a consequence of multitasking – for example, listening to music while reading Facebook. The technology itself can be employed to provide information about usage (eg: adwords in google). We can even employ systems, such as eyeball tracking, to identify audience viewing habits within a cluttered media landscape.

Despite these and other techniques, tracking changes in audience behaviour is a challenge. This is as much a consequence of changing concepts surrounding audiences as it is a result of changes in media itself. The idea of the audience must now take into account new concepts of the user and the prosumer, how these interrelate with existing notions of an active audience, and how these change the nature of how we understand texts, readings, and issues of consumption and (re)production.

5.2.1 Discussion

1. Discuss the relative merits of various methods of audience research such as focus groups, in-depth research, media use diaries, surveying population samples and 'hidden' online technologies.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6.1: Newspapers and Digital News

6.2: Ethics of Mass Media

6.2.1: Introduction

6.2.2: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

6.2.3: News Media and Ethics

6.2.4: Ethical Considerations of the Online World

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Mahatma Gandhi. Image by Vinoth Chandar, CCBY. [Source: Flickr.](#)

“In the very first month of *Indian Opinion*, I realized that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy. If the control is from without, it proves more poisonous than want of control. It can be profitable only when exercised from within. If this line of reasoning is correct, how many of the journals in the world would stand the test? But who would stop those that are useless? And who should be the judge? The useful and the useless must, like good and evil generally, go on together, and man must make his choice.” — Mahatma Gandhi from his book *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, 1982

6.1.1 Threats to Ethical Journalism are Threats to Democracy

Since the website [Newspaper Death Watch](#) was founded in early 2007, at least 15 metropolitan daily newspapers have kicked the ink bucket. The “death watch” site focuses on **metropolitan daily newspapers** — those that cover large cities or a few geographically connected smaller cities. Since small-town newspapers come and go more often and typically do not set the news agenda for hundreds of thousands of people, they are not tracked by the site. Nevertheless, any time a newspaper stops publishing it removes a vital community resource.

When people lament the decline of newspapers, it is not only the ink on paper they worry about. The loss of news-gathering staff and editors hurts democracy because our political system is built on the assumption that citizens need information to make informed decisions, to vote and to communicate with elected officials. In the United States, the professional news media are under attack by politicians, particularly those on the extreme right. As [the song goes](#), “You don’t know what you’ve got ’til it’s gone.” Mistrust of the free press [leads to the destruction of free speech and the erosion of personal liberty](#).



Journalists gather information at a pre-planned news event by Esther Vargas, CCBY. [Source: Flickr.](#)

In the book *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel write of the clampdown on the media in Soviet-influenced Poland in 1981. The Polish government declared martial law and stopped the free broadcast of news, replacing it with state-controlled media. When the state media shows came on, people protested by walking their dogs to city parks and discussing current events. They also used video cameras to create their own documentaries. They used journalism made by regular people, known as **citizen journalism**, to express their desire for freedom and to stay informed. [Kovach and Rosenstiel argue](#) that the Polish people used journalism to support democratic liberty.

It should not have to come to this in America. Free speech and the norms of professional journalists are worthy of popular protection. We live in a digital media environment awash with information. Only a portion of the messages on social media come from professional news organizations that work to reinforce their stories with balanced fact-seeking and fact-checking. Preserving carefully reported, factual news is in the interest of the republic. The **slow journalism** movement seeks to [protect accuracy and](#)

[care in journalism](#). Consider learning more about this form of news: It is both a professional movement within the mass communication field and a social movement.

6.1.1.1 News Norms

As was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, **news norms** are the standards that guide professional journalists. The term “norm” refers to a behavior that rational people agree is (or should be) considered normal in society. Journalists are open about their information sources. When they do not disclose the name of a source, they explain as much about the person as they can and they explain why they are not able to say more. Journalists have two major truth strategies that they employ: **objectivity and transparency**. The objectivity norm refers to efforts to keep individual biases out of the published news and to consider the information presented by sources with an open mind during the information gathering process. No one is completely objective, and no news outlet is, either. Note the difference, however, between opinion content and news content coming from news organizations.

Newspapers will often publish opinions, and this is within the norms of journalism so long as it is labeled as such and it presents a fact-based opinion. Differentiating between opinion content and news content can be difficult for audience members. It is the responsibility of news organizations to explain what they are doing. This is the transparency news norm put into action. Demonstrating **transparency** in information gathering and publishing requires showing audiences how the news is made. In some cases, it even means inviting audience members to join in the process of reporting professional news stories. Transparency goes beyond presenting two or more extreme points of view on a news topic and calling it fair. Instead, journalists explain the epistemology of news, or how they know what they know. The evolution of news norms is in part a response to the challenges audience members face in trying to figure out whom to trust.

6.1.1.2 Evolving Ethics

Another norm in newspapers and digital journalism that is rapidly changing is the absolute separation of news and advertising. It used to be called [the separation of “church and state”](#) in news: Keeping advertising influence apart from news judgment was as essential to the practice as was the actual separation of church and state in American governance. To retain an objective point of view when covering a community, journalists often tried to ignore news organization revenues and their sources. Now, as news organizations become smaller, journalists often have to be aware of advertisers’ identities and their interests in particular audiences. Journalists have to care about the business.



A man glances over his newspaper and his glasses by Nicolas Alejandro, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

It goes against codes of ethics to publish news information in direct support of an advertiser, but journalists are increasingly paying attention to what stories and topics are popular. Reactions to this development vary widely. To some, this is the death of ethics in the industry. To others, the idea that advertising and journalism were ever completely separate is a joke. Advertisers, at least in local news environments, are community businesses. They are stakeholders just as other readers are. They should be included as sources of information and opinion. At issue is how much power local businesses should wield, when they should be able to wield it, and whether anyone is harmed when they do. The calculus should perhaps be different for national news organizations who are swayed by huge multinational firms when journalists pay too much attention to the wishes of advertisers.

The concern under this new ethical line of thinking for local journalism is that now advertisers will hold even more sway than they did in the past because revenues are down and news organizations are looking somewhat desperately to sustain the work. Journalists have to work to build audiences without falling into sensationalism and without allowing advertiser influence on news content. It is a daily battle, but it will likely be essential for news organizations moving forward. Appealing to audiences, however, does not mean choosing partisan favorites and feeding audiences what they want. This is a recipe for allowing bad faith into professional news content.

6.1.1.3 Cable News, Bias and Polarization

The rise of partisan cable news channels has helped to create **echo chambers** where news consumers can find and then primarily rely on information that confirms their biases. Social media algorithms also feed echo chambers by showing us more content from people we already agree with. These algorithms **tend to serve us content resembling what we have already enjoyed in the past**, thereby creating a **filter bubble**. All in all, this makes it a challenge for us to consider other points of view. Combined, echo chambers and filter bubbles in a partisan information environment can create separate realities depending on the politics of groups being served.

The hyper-partisan, divided media landscape creates a problem for news organizations striving to be objective. No matter how they report the news, the facts they present may seem to run contrary to the misinformation or highly-opinionated information people are used to seeing on their social media feeds. This is not to equate misinformation with opinion content. The two are not equivalent. Deeply-held opinions can still be based on facts. Misinformation is dangerous because it is presented in bad faith. That is, the people presenting the information know it is not true and present it regardless. This is several steps beyond having an opinion. This is lying. It happens in echo chambers and sometimes bleeds into otherwise objective news outlets disguised as an equal side of a partisan argument.



A reporter with 2M TV prepares to speak with Maj. Gen. David R. Hogg, U.S. Army Africa commander, at the Marrakech Security Forum in Marrakech, Morocco, by Sgt. 1st Class Kyle Davis, U.S. Army, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

What is lost when news consumers fail to think critically about the news and opinion information presented to them is not only the prestige of the newspaper and digital news industry but also the shared narrative. People used to disagree with different opinions being presented in the news, but they generally agreed that what they saw on the news was actually happening. Audiences could disagree on prioritization of information and they could take issue with the frames applied to the news without questioning whether anything and everything was “fake.” Now there is a tendency to trust what is emotionally appealing rather than what is rationally argued or factually accurate. The problem with this should immediately be obvious to anyone following 21st-century American news and politics. People are swayed by passion and opinion, and it is incredibly easy to feel informed by consuming massive amounts of information from social media streams even if those streams are filtered to appeal to our emotions.

People are often overwhelmed when trying to rationally comprehend constant flows of emotional information. The challenge for news consumers is to build and select the best filters. We must take an active role in filtering our own information rather than allowing social media and search engine algorithms to reassure us constantly. It has always been a citizen’s responsibility to be informed. It has never been easier to find information. It has also never been more difficult to navigate information flows, to borrow a concept from noted sociologist Manuel Castells. The idea that we live in an environment of information flows is meant to differentiate our information environment from previous ones where the spread of information was not both instantaneous and massive. Before the global spread of the publicly available high-speed internet access and near constant access to mobile data we had to seek out information. Now, it envelops us. Instead of pulling information into our lives like water onto dry land, we are up to our necks in information and few of us are strong swimmers.

6.1.1.4 The Importance of Journalism

The good news is that teaching people to be media literate can do something to mitigate this situation. This may be an essential role of journalists in the future. The challenge for contributing to an informed society is no longer to bring people new information but

rather to help people to navigate information flows. If the task previously was to source and carry potable water for people, the job of journalists in the future may be to help people navigate oceans of saltwater themselves until we can find fresh water together.

Newspapers and their digital counterparts do not seem poised to do this work alone. The loss of jobs in the past 20 years has been devastating. Local television news outlets are often trusted more than national news outlets. If nothing else, audiences can see that the people delivering our news live in the same community, root for the same sports teams and are subject to the same weather and traffic. Generally speaking, though, local television stations do not employ nearly the number of reporters that newspapers did when they were strong.



Yanjun Zhao, Patrick Howe, Paul Fontaine, Lisa Lynch, Juliette De Maeyer, Claudia Silva, and Alex Avila at speak at the 2014 ISOJ on the UT-Austin campus, Apr. 4, 2014 by Gabriel Cristóver Pérez of the Knight Center, CCBY. Source: Flickr.

The bread and butter for local television news is breaking news and events coverage. Reporting consistently on in-depth issues takes resources and will require a shift in focus for most local television news outfits. Investigative journalism in television newsrooms is on the rise, but having an I-team is not the same as having a half dozen reporters covering City Hall, the statehouse, the local education scene and the business community. Local general assignment [television reporters often get their news from newspapers](#). Television reporters then look to update a story beyond what was published in the newspaper. The term for this is **intermedia agenda setting**, and it has been seen at the national level as well as the local level. For television stations to capitalize on the trust audiences have and help them navigate the information environment, the industry will have to evolve quickly.

Digital news organizations will also try to pick up the slack. In the 21st century, we have seen the rise of news organizations originating on the Web or as mobile apps. The challenge for BuzzFeed, Vox and other online news operations is to be taken seriously and to maintain strong enough revenues to stay afloat. The digital media environment is notorious for being good for Google and Facebook and bad for everyone else. We continue to examine alternate revenue sources besides advertising. Students interested in being well informed are encouraged to subscribe to the digital versions of their local trusted news outlets.

6.1.1.5 The Future of Digital News

The future of newspapers and digital news organizations, including the future of broadcast news (as it will be the next to be affected by digital convergence), may be to have news outlets splitting themselves into two-headed monsters. They must keep up with breaking news and be where audiences are in the network society to serve as guides in the sea of information, and they must also be socially responsible community members serving as a check on power by doing original in-depth reporting.

Tools such as Google Analytics, Chartbeat, Adobe Analytics, and others help newsrooms track how they are reaching audiences. The threat is that these tools will direct newsrooms rather than the news information itself being each organization's compass. As a vast industry, journalism can serve with a renewed sense of purpose if it orients itself to guide rather than lecture media consumers. People eventually learn when they have been lied to, and we have the ability to create a record of who told the truth and who did not. In order to hold people's attention, we need to perform the services they need most.

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SECTION OVERVIEW

6.2.1: Introduction

6.2.2: Ethical Issues in Mass Media

6.2.3: News Media and Ethics

6.2.4: Ethical Considerations of the Online World

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The U.S. Constitution's First Amendment guarantees Americans freedom of the press, which many would agree is an important ingredient in upholding democratic principles. Freedom from government censorship allows the news media to keep citizens informed about the state of their society. But when does the press take this freedom from censorship and restriction too far? The death of Princess Diana in 1997 brought fierce criticism against the paparazzi, and tabloid reporting in general, when it was found that the princess's car had been pursued by paparazzi vehicles before the crash that caused her death. In June 2011, Tori Spelling crashed after being chased by paparazzi. She was pregnant at the time and feared for her unborn child. In July 2011, paparazzi were detained for chasing Paris Jackson (Michael Jackson's daughter). Despite these incidents, the public's interest in celebrity gossip has not diminished; rather, the growth of online news sources has led to a proliferation of celebrity gossip websites.



Figure 14.1

A potential concern regarding this trend is that tabloid-style gossip is not confined to public figures in the entertainment industry; it can have far-reaching consequences. As noted in Chapter 2, the firing of General Stanley McChrystal from his post as commander of all U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan in June 2010 was nearly the direct result of an article in *Rolling Stone*, in which he made less-than-flattering comments about Vice President Joe Biden. Michael Hastings, "The Runaway General," *Rolling Stone*, June 25, 2010, <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/17390/119236>. McChrystal himself did not directly criticize the president or the administration's policies; instead, his views were inferred from comments made by his aides. MSNBC, "Obama, McCain, Kerry Comment on McChrystal," June 22, 2010, http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/37850711/ns/us_news-military/. However, this was sufficient to cost him his job. In recent years, tabloid reporting has become increasingly invasive and sometimes dangerous.

Should the government begin placing stronger regulations on tabloid reporting as privacy advocates have argued? The Constitution, after all, while guaranteeing freedom of the press, also has been interpreted as guaranteeing individuals certain rights to privacy, and most journalists would agree that standards of ethical journalism include efforts to protect these rights. However, some paparazzi photographers and celebrity journalists disregard journalistic codes of ethics in their efforts to get a story. Patrick J. Alach, "Paparazzi and Privacy," *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review* 28, no. 3 (2008): 205. Many argue that because celebrities are "public figures," the same privacy rights that protect the general public don't apply. *Us Weekly's* editor in chief, Janice Min, has argued, "A celebrity is like an elected official. If you're getting paid \$20 million a movie, you have to rely on public goodwill to stay in office. You have to accept the fact that you're a public commodity." Donna Freydkin, "Celebrities Fight for Privacy," *USA Today*, July 6, 2004, http://www.usatoday.com/life/people/2004-07-06-celeb-privacy_x.htm. Harvey Levin, editor in chief for the popular celebrity gossip blog TMZ, would agree. When discussing invasions into the private lives of stars like Britney Spears, Levin proclaimed that "Britney is gold; she is crack to our readers. Her life is a complete train-wreck and I

thank God for her every day.”*New York Times*, “TMZ Productions,” Times Topics, July 7, 2009, http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/companies/tmz_productions/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=tmz&st=cse.

On the other side of the debate, many argue that the public-figure limitation should be balanced with the consideration of a story’s newsworthiness. As law professor Patrick J. Alack has argued, “If ‘social value’ is what constitutes newsworthiness, it is hard to imagine a more perverse concept of social value that incorporates ... Paris Hilton’s late-night dining preferences or Lindsay Lohan’s driving habits.”Patrick J. Alach, “Paparazzi and Privacy,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Review* 28, no. 3 (2008): 237.

TMZ, a website that publishes celebrity news in real time, was launched in 2005, and since its creation the site has received numerous criticisms from more prestigious news sources like *The Washington Post* and ABC News. Yet Thane Burnett, reporter for *The Toronto Sun*, admits that “despite the sideways glances, mainstream news services prowl TMZ’s site for coverage.”Thane Burnett, “Caught on Camera,” *Toronto Sun*, May 12, 2009, www.torontosun.com/entertainment/celebrities/2009/05/12/9429036-sun.html. With the immediacy of Internet news coverage, mainstream media outlets face increasing pressure to release major news while it is still fresh. That pressure is compounded by celebrity gossip sites like TMZ that may resort to unorthodox methods to gather information; the shelf life of breaking news is growing increasingly shorter.

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Learning Objectives

- Explain the importance of racial and gender diversity in mass media.
- Identify the ethical concerns associated with race and gender stereotypes.
- List some common concerns about sexual content in the media.

In the competitive and rapidly changing world of mass-media communications, media professionals—overcome by deadlines, bottom-line imperatives, and corporate interests—can easily lose sight of the ethical implications of their work. However, as entertainment law specialist Sherri Burr points out, “Because network television is an audiovisual medium that is piped free into ninety-nine percent of American homes, it is one of the most important vehicles for depicting cultural images to our population.” Sherri Burr, “Television and Societal Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Context,” *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 4 (2001): 159. Considering the profound influence mass media like television have on cultural perceptions and attitudes, it is important for the creators of media content to grapple with ethical issues.

6.2.2.1 Stereotypes, Prescribed Roles, and Public Perception

The U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. According to U.S. Census statistics from 2010, 27.6 percent of the population identifies its race as non-white. U.S. Census Bureau, “2010 Census Data,” 2010.census.gov/2010census/data/. Yet in network television broadcasts, major publications, and other forms of mass media and entertainment, minorities are often either absent or presented as heavily stereotyped, two-dimensional characters. Rarely are minorities depicted as complex characters with the full range of human emotions, motivations, and behaviors. Meanwhile, the stereotyping of women, gays and lesbians, and individuals with disabilities in mass media has also been a source of concern.

The word *stereotype* originated in the printing industry as a method of making identical copies, and the practice of stereotyping people is much the same: a system of identically replicating an image of an “other.” As related in Chapter 8 about D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, a film that relied on racial stereotypes to portray Southern whites as victims in the American Civil War, stereotypes—especially those disseminated through mass media—become a form of social control, shaping collective perceptions and individual identities. In American mass media, the white man is still shown as the standard: the central figure of television narratives and the dominant perspective on everything from trends, to current events, to politics. White maleness becomes an invisible category because it gives the impression of being the norm. Joanna Hearne, “Hollywood Whiteness and Stereotypes,” Film Reference, <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Race-and-Ethnicity-HOLLYWOOD-WHITENESS-AND-STEREOTYPES.html>.

6.2.2.2 Minority Exclusion and Stereotypes

In the fall of 1999, when the major television networks released their schedules for the upcoming programming season, a startling trend became clear. Of the 26 newly released television programs, none depicted an African American in a leading role, and even the secondary roles on these shows included almost no racial minorities. In response to this omission, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), an advocacy group for Hispanic Americans, organized protests and boycotts. Pressured—and embarrassed—into action, the executives from the major networks made a fast dash to add racial minorities to their prime-time shows, not only among actors, but also among producers, writers, and directors. Four of the networks—ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox—added a vice president of diversity position to help oversee the networks’ progress toward creating more diverse programming. Leonard M. Baynes, “White Out: The Absence and Stereotyping of People of Color by the Broadcast Networks in Prime Time Entertainment Programming,” *Arizona Law Review* 45 (2003): 293.

Despite these changes and greater public attention regarding diversity issues, minority underrepresentation is still an issue in all areas of mass media. In fact, the trend in recent years has been regressive. In a recent study, the NAACP reported that the number of minority actors on network television has actually decreased, from 333 during the 2002–2003 season to 307 four years later. WWAY, “NAACP Not Pleased With the Diversity on Television,” January 12, 2009, www.wwaytv3.com/naACP_not_pleased_diversity_television/01/2009. Racial minorities are often absent, peripheral, or take on stereotyped roles in film, television, print media, advertising, and even in video games. Additionally, according to a 2002 study by the University of California, Los Angeles, the problem is not only a visible one, but also one that extends behind the scenes. The

study found that minorities are even more underrepresented in creative and decision-making positions than they are on screen. Media Awareness Network, “Ethnic and Visible Minorities in Entertainment Media,” 2010, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/ethnics_and_minorities/minorities_entertainment.cfm. This lack of representation among producers, writers, and directors often directly affects the way minorities are portrayed in film and television, leading to racial stereotypes.

Though advocacy groups like the NCLR and the NAACP have often been at the forefront of protests against minority stereotypes in the media, experts are quick to point out that the issue is one everyone should be concerned about. As media ethicist Leonard M. Baynes argues, “Since we live in a relatively segregated country...broadcast television and its images and representations are very important because television can be the common meeting ground for all Americans.” Leonard M. Baynes, “White Out: The Absence and Stereotyping of People of Color by the Broadcast Networks in Prime Time Entertainment Programming,” *Arizona Law Review* 45 (2003): 293. There are clear correlations between mass media portrayals of minority groups and public perceptions. In 1999, after hundreds of complaints by African Americans that they were unable to get taxis to pick them up, the city of New York launched a crackdown, threatening to revoke the licenses of cab drivers who refused to stop for African American customers. When interviewed by reporters, many cab drivers blamed their actions on fears they would be robbed or asked to drive to dangerous neighborhoods. Sherri Burr, “Television and Societal Effects: An Analysis of Media Images of African-Americans in Historical Context,” *Journal of Gender, Race and Justice* 4 (2001): 159.

Racial stereotypes are not only an issue in entertainment media; they also find their way into news reporting, which is a form of storytelling. Journalists, editors, and reporters are still predominately white. According to a 2000 survey, only 11.6 percent of newsroom staff in the United States were racial and ethnic minorities. Media Awareness Network, “Ethnic and Visible Minorities in the News,” 2010, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/ethnics_and_minorities/minorities_news.cfm. The situation has not improved dramatically during the past decade. According to a 2008 newsroom census released by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, the percentage of minority journalists working at daily newspapers was a scant 13.52 percent. National Association of Hispanic Journalists, “NAHJ Disturbed by Figures That Mask Decline in Newsroom Diversity,” news release, 2010, www.nahj.org/nahjnews/articles/2008/April/ASNE.shtml. Because of this underrepresentation behind the scenes, the news media is led by those whose perspective is already privileged, who create the narratives about those without privilege. In the news media, racial minorities are often cast in the role of villains or troublemakers, which in turn shapes public perceptions about these groups. Media critics Robert Entman and Andrew Rojecki point out that images of African Americans on welfare, African American violence, and urban crime in African American communities “facilitate the construction of menacing imagery.” Clifford G. Christians, “Communication Ethics,” in *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, ed. Carl Mitchum (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 1:366. Similarly, a study by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists found that only 1 percent of the evening news stories aired by the three major U.S. television networks cover Latinos or Latino issues, and that when Latinos are featured, they are portrayed negatively 80 percent of the time. Media Awareness Network, “Ethnic and Visible Minorities in the News.” Still others have criticized journalists and reporters for a tendency toward reductive presentations of complex issues involving minorities, such as the religious and racial tensions fueled by the September 11 attacks. By reducing these conflicts to “opposing frames”—that is, by oversimplifying them as two-sided struggles so that they can be quickly and easily understood—the news media helped create a greater sense of separation between Islamic Americans and the dominant culture after September 11, 2001. Ginny Whitehouse, “Why Diversity Is an Ethical Issue,” *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, ed. Lee Wilkins and Clifford G. Christians (New York: Routledge, 2009), 101.

Since the late 1970s, the major professional journalism organizations in the United States—Associated Press Managing Editors (APME), Newspaper Association of America (NAA), American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), Society for Professional Journalists (SPJ), Radio and Television News Directors Association (RTNDA), and others—have included greater ethnic diversity as a primary goal or ethic. However, progress has been slow. ASNE has set 2025 as a target date to have minority representation in newsrooms match U.S. demographics. Ginny Whitehouse, “Why Diversity Is an Ethical Issue,” *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, ed. Lee Wilkins and Clifford G. Christians (New York: Routledge, 2009), 102.

Because the programming about, by, and for ethnic minorities in the mainstream media is disproportionately low, many turn to niche publications and channels such as BET, Univision, Telemundo, *Essence*, *Jet*, and others for sources of information and entertainment. In fact, 45 percent of ethnic-minority adults prefer these niche media sources to mainstream television, radio programs, and newspapers. Ginny Whitehouse, “Why Diversity Is an Ethical Issue,” *The Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, ed. Lee

Wilkins and Clifford G. Christians (New York: Routledge, 2009), 103. These sources cover stories about racial minorities that are generally ignored by the mainstream press and offer ethnic-minority perspectives on more widely covered issues in the news. Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, “Ethnic,” in *The State of the News Media 2010*, www.stateofthemedial.org/2010/ethnic_summary_essay.php. Entertainment channels like BET (a 24-hour cable television station that offers music videos, dramas featuring predominately black casts, and other original programming created by African Americans) provide the diverse programming that mainstream television networks often drop. Rachel Zellars, “Black Entertainment Television (BET),” in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History*, 2nd ed., ed. Colin A. Palmer (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006.) 1:259. Print sources like *Vista*, a bilingual magazine targeting U.S. Hispanics, and *Vivid*, the most widely circulated African American periodical, appeal to ethnic minority groups because they are controlled and created by individuals within these groups. Though some criticize ethnic niche media, claiming that they erode common ground or, in some instances, perpetuate stereotypes, the popularity of these media has only grown in recent years and will likely continue in the absence of more diverse perspectives in mainstream media sources. Can Tran, “TV Network Reviews: Black Entertainment Television (BET),” *Helium*, www.helium.com/items/884989-tv-network-reviews-black-entertainment-television-bet; Joe Flint, “No Black-and-White Answer for the Lack of Diversity on Television,” *Company Town* (blog), *Los Angeles Times*, June 11, 2010, <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/entertainmentnewsbuzz/2010/06/diversity-television.html>.

6.2.2.3 Femininity in Mass Media

In the ABC sitcom *The Donna Reed Show* (1958–1966), actress Donna Reed plays a stay-at-home mother who fills her days with housework, cooking for her husband and children, decorating, and participating in community organizations, all while wearing pearls, heels, and stylish dresses. Such a traditional portrayal of femininity no doubt sounds dated to modern audiences, but stereotyped gender roles continue to thrive in the mass media. Women are still often represented as subordinate to their male counterparts—emotional, noncompetitive, domestic, and sweet natured. In contrast to these types, other women are represented as unattractively masculine, crazy, or cruel. In television dramas and sitcoms, women continue to fill traditional roles such as mothers, nurses, secretaries, and housewives. By contrast, men in film and television are less likely to be shown in the home, and male characters are generally characterized by dominance, aggression, action, physical strength, and ambition. Daniel Chandler, “Television and Gender Roles” www.aber.ac.uk/media/Modules/TF33120/gendertv.html#E. In the mainstream news media, men are predominately featured as authorities on specialized issues like business, politics, and economics, while women are more likely to report on stories about natural disasters or domestic violence—coverage that does not require expertise. Media Awareness Network, “Media Coverage of Women and Women’s Issues,” www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_working.cfm. In sports programming, men are the authoritative figures in the broadcast booth while women are “sideline reporters.”

Not only is the white male perspective still presented as the standard, authoritative one, but also the media itself often comes to embody the male gaze. Media commentator Nancy Hass notes that “shows that don’t focus on men have to feature the sort of women that guys might watch.” Media Awareness Network, “The Economics of Gender Stereotyping,” www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_economics.cfm. Feminist critics have long been concerned by the way women in film, television, and print media are defined by their sexuality. Few female role models exist in the media who are valued primarily for qualities like intelligence or leadership. Inundated by images that conform to unrealistic beauty standards, women come to believe at an early age that their value depends on their physical attractiveness. According to one *Newsweek* article, eating disorders in girls are now routinely being diagnosed at younger ages, sometimes as early as 8 or 9. The models who appear in magazines and print advertising are unrealistically skinny (23 percent thinner than the average woman), and their photographs are further enhanced to hide flaws and blemishes. Meanwhile, the majority of women appearing on television are under the age of 30, and many older actresses, facing the pressure to embody the youthful ideal, undergo surgical enhancements to appear younger. Jennifer L. Derenne and Eugene V. Beresin, “Body Image, Media, and Eating Disorders,” *Academic Psychiatry* 30 (2006), ap.psychiatryonline.org/cgi/content/full/30/3/257. One recent example is television news host Greta Van Susteren, a respected legal analyst who moved from CNN to Fox in 2002. At the debut of her show, *On the Record*, Van Susteren, sitting behind a table that allowed viewers to see her short skirt, had undergone not only a hair and wardrobe makeover, but also surgical enhancement to make her appear younger and more attractive. Media Awareness Network, “Media Coverage of Women and Women’s Issues,” www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_working.cfm. However, these enhancements are

not restricted to the “over 30” crowd. Indeed, younger stars, such as Ashley Tisdale (*High School Musical*), singer Ashlee Simpson, and reality star Heidi Montag, have all availed themselves of plastic surgery.

In addition to the prevalence of gender stereotypes, the ratio of men to women in the mass media, in and behind the scenes, is also disproportionate. Surprisingly, though women slightly outnumber men in the general population, over two-thirds of television sitcoms feature men in the starring role. Media Awareness Network, “The Economics of Gender Stereotyping,” www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_economics.cfm. Among writers, producers, directors, and editors, the number of women lags far behind. In Hollywood, for instance, only 17 percent of behind-the-scenes creative talent is represented by women. Communications researcher Martha Lauzen argues that “when women have more powerful roles in the making of a movie or television show, we know that we also get more powerful female characters on-screen, women who are more real and more multi-dimensional.” Media Awareness Network, “Women Working in the Media,” www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_working.cfm.

6.2.2.4 Sexual Content in Public Communication

Creators of all forms of media know that sex—named, innuendoed, or overtly displayed—is a surefire way to grab an audience’s attention. “Sex sells” is an advertising cliché; the list of products that advertisers have linked to erotic imagery or innuendo, from cosmetics and cars to vacation packages and beer, is nearly inexhaustible. Most often, sexualized advertising content is served up in the form of the female body, in part or in whole, featured in provocative or suggestive poses beside a product that may have nothing to do with sexuality. However, by linking these two things, advertisers are marketing desire itself.



Figure 14.2 Sex Sells: Commodifying Desire, Past and Present

Sex is used to sell not just consumer goods; it sells media, too. Music videos on MTV and VH1, which promote artists and their music, capture audience attention with highly suggestive dance moves, often performed by scantily clad women. Recent music videos by Jennifer Lopez, Rihanna, Beyoncé, and Lady Gaga are just a few examples. Movie trailers may flash brief images of nudity or passionate kissing to suggest more to come in the movie. Video games feature female characters like Lara Croft of *Tomb*

Raider, whose tightly fitted clothes reveal all the curves of her Barbie-doll figure. And partially nude models grace the cover of men's and women's magazines like *Maxim*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Vogue* where cover lines promise titillating tips, gossip, and advice on bedroom behavior. Tom Reichert and Jacqueline Lambiasi, "Peddling Desire: Sex and the Marketing of Media and Consumer Goods," *Sex in Consumer Culture: The Erotic Content of Media and Marketing*, ed. Tom Reichert and Jacqueline Lambiasi (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

In the 1920s and 1930s, filmmakers attracted audiences to the silver screen with the promise of what was then considered scandalous content. Prior to the 1934 Hays Code, which placed restrictions on "indecent" content in movies, films featured erotic dances, male and female nudity, references to homosexuality, and sexual violence (for more information on the Hays Code, see Chapter 8 and Chapter 15). D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916) includes scenes with topless actresses, as does *Ben Hur* (1925). In Warner Bros.' *Female* (1933), the leading lady, the head of a major car company, spends her evenings in sexual exploits with her male employees, a story line that would never have passed the Hays Code a year later. Gary Morris, "Public Enemy: Warner Brothers in the Pre-Code Era," *Bright Lights Film Journal*, September 1996, http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/17/04b_warner.php. *Trouble in Paradise*, a 1932 romantic comedy, was withdrawn from circulation after the institution of the Hays Code because of its frank discussion of sexuality. Similarly, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931), which featured a prostitute as one of the main characters, was also banned under the code. Daniel P. Haussner, "Indecent and Deviant: Pre-Hays Code Films You Should See," *indieWIRE*, 2007, www.spout.com/groups/Top_5/Re_5_Pre_Hays_Code_Films/190/19210/1/ShowPost.aspx.

In the 1960s, when the sexual revolution led to increasingly permissive attitudes toward sexuality in American culture, the Hays Code was replaced with the MPAA rating system, with ratings such as G, PG, and R. The rating system, designed to warn parents about potentially objectionable material in films, allowed filmmakers to include sexually explicit content without fear of public protest. Since the replacement of the Hays Code, sexual content has been featured in movies with much greater frequency.

The problem, according to many media critics, is not that sex now appears more often, but that it is almost always portrayed unrealistically in American mass media. Mary Lou Galician, *Sex, Love & Romance in the Mass Media* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5; Media Awareness Network, "Sex and Relationships in the Media," *Media Awareness Network*, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm. This can be harmful, they say, because the mass media are important socialization agents; that is, ways that people learn about the norms, expectations, and values of their society. Mary Lou Galician, *Sex, Love & Romance in the Mass Media* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 82. Sex, as many films, television shows, music videos, and song lyrics present it, is frequent and casual. Rarely do these media point out the potential emotional and physical consequences of sexual behavior. According to one study, portrayals of sex that include possible risks like sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy only occur in 15 percent of the sexually explicit material on television. Parents Television Council, "Facts and TV Statistics," www.parentstv.org/ptc/facts/mediafacts.asp. Additionally, actors and models depicted in sexual relationships in the media are thinner, younger, and more attractive than the average adult. This creates unrealistic expectations about the necessary ingredients for a satisfying sexual relationship.

Social psychologists are particularly concerned with the negative effects these unrealistic portrayals have on women, as women's bodies are the primary means of introducing sexual content into media targeted at both men and women. Media activist Jean Kilbourne points out that "women's bodies are often dismembered into legs, breasts or thighs, reinforcing the message that women are objects rather than whole human beings." Media Awareness Network, "Sex and Relationships in the Media," *Media Awareness Network*, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm. *Adbusters*, a magazine that critiques mass media, particularly advertising, points out the sexual objectification of women's bodies in a number of its spoof advertisements, such as the one in Figure 14.3, bringing home the message that advertising often sends unrealistic and harmful messages about women's bodies and sexuality. Additionally, many researchers note that in women's magazines, advertising, and music videos, women are often implicitly—and sometimes explicitly—given the message that a primary concern should be attracting and sexually satisfying men. Media Awareness Network, "Sex and Relationships in the Media," *Media Awareness Network*, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm. Furthermore, the recent increase in entertainment featuring sexual violence may, according to some studies, negatively affect the way young men behave toward women. Barrie Gunter, *Media Sex: What Are the Issues?* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 8.



Figure 14.3 Sexual objectification: Women's bodies are often headless or dismembered into legs, breasts, or thighs in media portrayals. Adbusters, "Spoof Ads," www.adbusters.org/gallery/spoofads.

Young women and men are especially vulnerable to the effects of media portrayals of sexuality. Psychologists have long noted that teens and children get much of their information and many of their opinions about sex through television, film, and online media. In fact, two-thirds of adolescents turn to the media first when they want to learn about sexuality. Media Awareness Network, "Sex and Relationships in the Media," *Media Awareness Network*, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm. The media may help shape teenage and adolescent attitudes toward sex, but they can also lead young people to engage in sexual activity before they are prepared to handle the consequences. According to one study, kids with high exposure to sex on television were almost twice as likely to initiate sexual activity compared to kids without exposure. Rebecca L. Collins and others, "Watching Sex on Television Predicts Adolescent Initiation of Sexual Behavior," *Pediatrics* 114, no. 3 (2004), <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/114/3/e280>.

Cultural critics have noted that sexually explicit themes in mass media are generally more widely accepted in European nations than they are in the United States. However, the increased concern and debates over censorship of sexual content in the United States may in fact be linked to the way sex is portrayed in American media rather than to the presence of the sexual content in and of itself. Unrealistic portrayals that fail to take into account the actual complexity of sexual relationships seem to be a primary concern. As Jean Kilbourne has argued, sex in the American media "has far more to do with trivializing sex than with promoting it. We are offered a pseudo-sexuality that makes it far more difficult to discover our own unique and authentic sexuality." Media Awareness Network, "Sex and Relationships in the Media," *Media Awareness Network*, www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/women_and_girls/women_sex.cfm. However, despite these criticisms, it is likely that unrealistic portrayals of sexual content will continue to be the norm in mass media unless the general public stops consuming these images.

6.2.2.5 Key Takeaways

- In American mass media, where the white male perspective is still presented as the standard, stereotypes of those who differ—women, ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians—are an issue of ethical concern.
- Racial minorities are often absent, peripheral, or stereotyped in film, television, print media, advertising, and video games.
- Racial stereotypes occur in news reporting, where they can influence public perceptions.
- Underrepresentation of women and racial and ethnic minorities is also a problem in the hiring of creative talent behind the scenes.
- The media still often subordinate women to traditional roles, where they serve as support for their male counterparts.
- The objectification of women in various visual media has particularly led to concerns about body image, unrealistic social expectations, and negative influence on children and adolescent girls.
- "Sex sells" consumer products and media such as movies and music videos.
- The issue of sexual content in the media has become a source of concern to media critics because of the frequency with which it occurs and also because of the unrealistic way it is portrayed.

? Exercise 6.2.2.1

Choose a television show or movie you are familiar with and consider the characters in terms of racial and gender diversity. Then answer the following short-answer questions. Each response should be one to two paragraphs.

1. Does the show or movie you've chosen reflect racial and gender diversity? Why or why not? Explain why this kind of diversity is important in media.
2. Are there any racial or gender stereotypes present in the show or movie you've chosen? If so, identify them and describe how they are stereotypical. If not, describe what elements would prevent the portrayal of a female or ethnic minority characters from being stereotypical.
3. Does the show or movie you've selected feature any sexual content? If so, do you think that the content is gratuitous or unrealistic, or does it serve the story? Explain your answer. Then explain why the use of sexual content in media is a concern for many media critics.

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Learning Objectives

- Describe the role of media in delivering news to the public.
- Identify the important characteristics of reliable journalism.
- Summarize the effects of bias in news presentations.

Now more than ever, with the presence of online news sources, news delivery is expected to be instantaneous, and journalists and news agencies face pressure to release stories rapidly to keep up with competing media sources. With this added pressure, standards of accuracy and fairness become more difficult to uphold. What wins when ethical responsibility and bottom-line concerns are at odds? Columnist Ellen Goodman notes that there has always been a tension in journalism between being first and being right. She argues, “In today’s amphetamine world of news junkies, speed trumps thoughtfulness too often.” Ellen Goodman, “Temper ‘Instant’ News Coverage,” *Gainesville (FL) Sun*, February 7, 1993, news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1320&dat=19930207&id=vt4RAAAAIBAJ&sjid=XuoDAAAIBAJ&pg=5028,1856837. As you read the following sections, decide if you agree with Goodman’s assessment of the state of the news media today.

6.2.3.1 Immediate News Delivery

In 1916, audiences across America tuned in to their radios to hear the first-ever breaking-news coverage of an event as the results of the presidential election between Woodrow Wilson and Charles Evans Hughes were announced from the offices of *The New York American*. Until that broadcast, news was delivered to American homes once per day in the form of a newspaper, and often this coverage lagged a day or more behind the actual incidents it reported. Whereas much of radio news coverage even into the 1930s involved the reading of newspaper stories and news wires on the air, radio offered something that the newspapers could not: live coverage of special events. Gordon Govier, “The Living Room Fixture,” *The Evolution of Radio News*, 2007, <http://www.radioscribe.com/formats.html>.

For decades, the public turned to the family radio when they wanted to hear the most recent coverage of important news. All of that changed, however, in 1963 with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. CBS correspondent Dan Rather took television audiences live to “the corner window just below the top floor, where the assassin stuck out his 30 caliber rifle,” and for the first time, people were able to see an event nearly as it occurred. This was the beginning of round-the-clock television news coverage, and the American public, while still relying on print news for detailed coverage, came to expect greater immediacy of major event reporting through television and radio broadcasts. Jaime Holguin, “Rather Recalls JFK Assassination,” *CBS News*, February 28, 2005, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/02/28/eveningnews/main677096.shtml.

Today, with the widespread availability of Internet news, instant coverage is the norm rather than the exception, and the Internet and cell phones have generally replaced television and radio as the source of immediate information. Visitors to ABCNews.com can watch an evening newscast three and a half hours before it airs on television. Patricia Sullivan, “As the Internet Grows Up, the News Industry Is Forever Changed,” *Washington Post*, June 19, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/13/AR2006061300929.html. RSS (which stands for *really simple syndication*, a standard for the easy syndication of online content) feeds, home pages for major news-delivery sites like Yahoo! News and CNN.com, news tickers, live video streams, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and a host of other media outlets ensure that news—and rumors of news—circulates within minutes of its occurrence. Additionally, with smartphone applications like those for *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, people can access the latest news coverage from almost anywhere.

The development of the Internet as a source of free and immediate access to information has forever changed the structure of the news media. Newspaper, television, and radio news programs have all had to adapt and diversify to compete for a share of the market. As Jeffrey Cole, director of the Center for Digital Communication put it, “For the first time in 60 years, newspapers are back in the breaking news business.” Online, newspapers can compete with broadcast media for immediate coverage, posting articles on their home pages as soon as the stories are written, and supplementing the articles on their websites with audiovisual content. Gone is the era of single-medium newsrooms with predictable deadlines. USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, “Annual Internet Survey by Center for the Digital Future Finds Large Increases in Use of Online Newspapers,” news release, Center for Digital Future, April 2009, <http://annenberg.usc.edu/News%20and%20Events/News/090429CDF.aspx>.

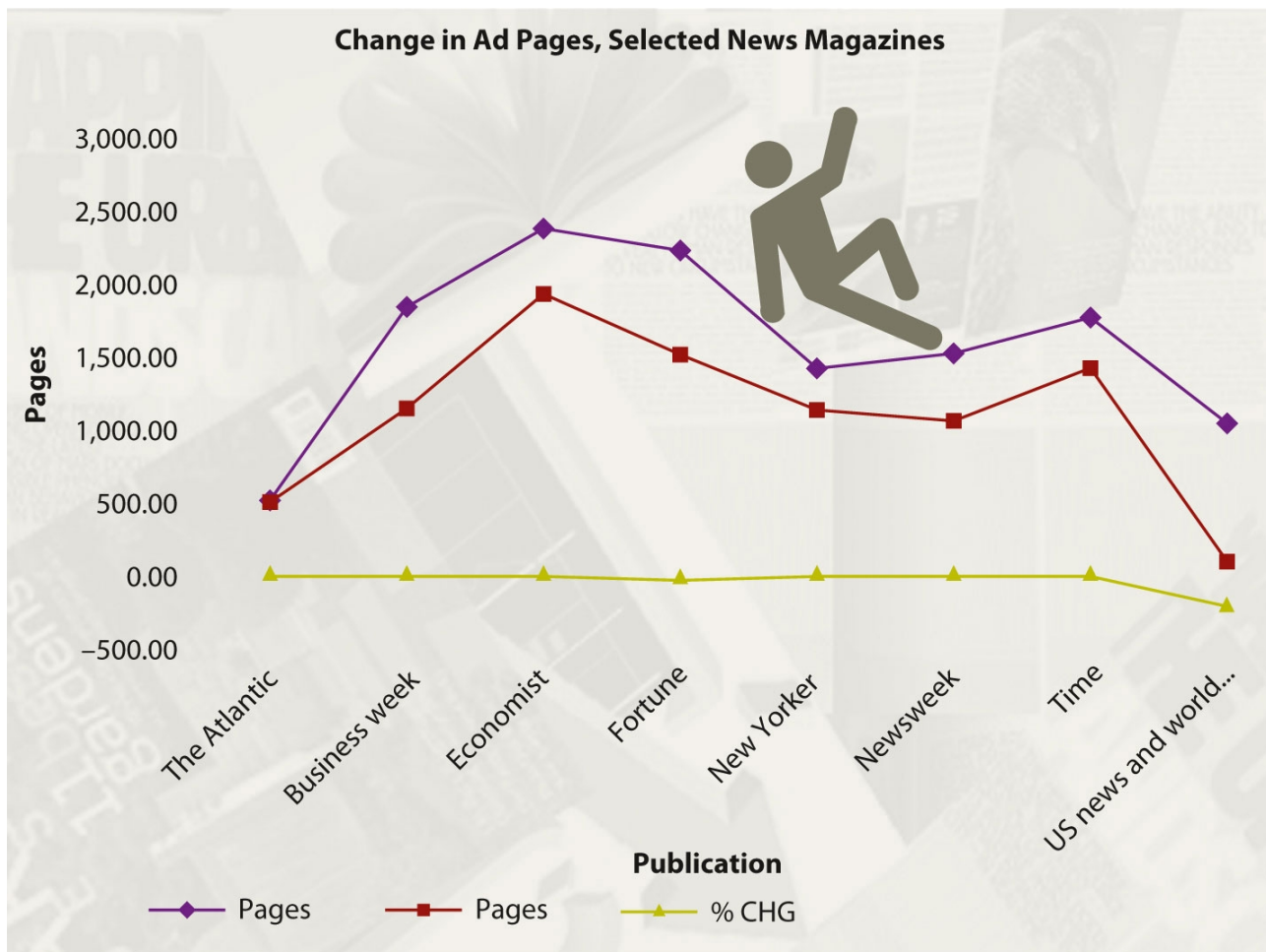
Not only are traditional news media restructuring, but news consumers are also changing the way they access information. Increasingly, audiences want news on demand; they want to get news when they want it, and they want to be able to gather it from a variety of sources. This is having a significant effect on media revenues. News aggregators, websites like Yahoo! News and Google News that compile news headlines from an array of legacy news organizations to display on their pages, have become popular information outlets. Although these websites don't hire reporters to produce news stories themselves, they get about the same amount of online traffic as websites for legacy news organizations like CNN and *The Wall Street Journal*. Moreover, many subscribers to print newspapers and magazines are canceling their subscriptions because they can get more current information online at no cost. Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2010*, www.stateofthemediamedia.org/2010/overview_intro.php. Print advertising is down as well. In 2004, *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported losing \$50 million in classified advertising to free online options like Craigslist. Patricia Sullivan, "As the Internet Grows Up, the News Industry Is Forever Changed," *Washington Post*, June 19, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/13/AR2006061300929.html.

This loss of revenue has become a problem in recent years because while newspapers and magazines generate some income from advertisements on their websites, the money is not enough to compensate for lost readership and print ads. Subscriptions and advertising in traditional print media still account for 90 percent of industry funds, which means with less revenue in these areas, the support base for news organizations is dwindling. Newspapers and magazines across the country have had to restructure and scale down. Newspapers now spend \$1.6 billion less annually on reporting and editing than they did 10 years ago. Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2010*.

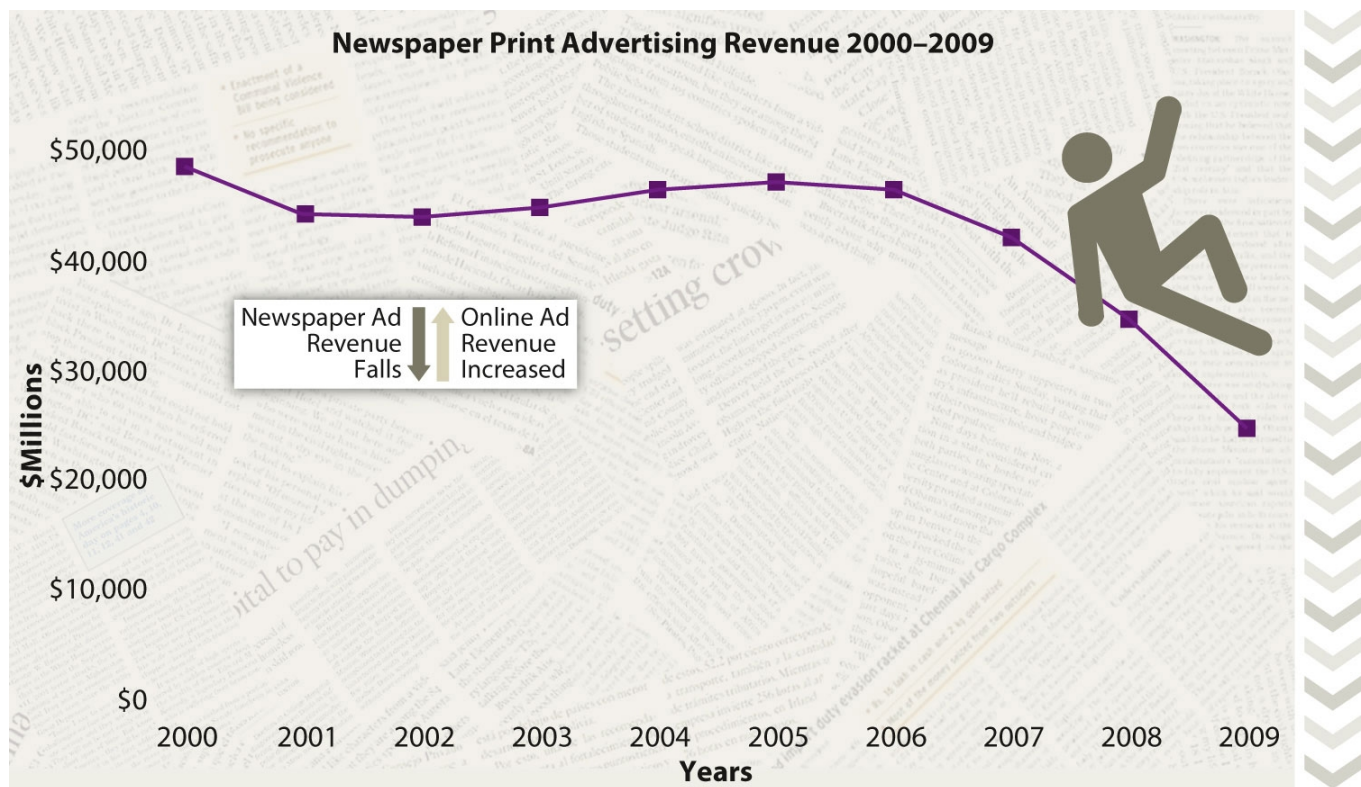
Additionally, reduced budgets combined with greater pressure for immediacy have changed the way information gets reported and disseminated. Newsrooms are asking their staffs to focus on producing first accounts more quickly to feed multiple platforms. This often means that more resources go into distributing information than gathering it. Once news is released online by one source, it spreads rapidly, and other organizations scramble to release accounts, too, in order to keep up, often leaving staff less time for fact-checking and editing. The initial story is then followed quickly by commentary from both professional news organizations and nonprofessional sources on blogs, Twitter, and other social networks.

As a result of this restructuring, certain stories may get distributed, replayed, and commented on almost excessively, while other stories go unnoticed and in-depth coverage that would unearth more facts and context gets neglected. This has led a number of industry professionals to become anxious over the future of the news industry. The Center for Excellence in Journalism has called the news industry today "more reactive than proactive." Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, *The State of the News Media 2010*. Journalist Patricia Sullivan complains, "Right now, almost no online news sites invest in original, in-depth and scrupulously edited news reporting." Patricia Sullivan, "As the Internet Grows Up, the News Industry Is Forever Changed," *Washington Post*, June 19, 2006, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/13/AR2006061300929.html. While some may disagree with Sullivan, in-depth journalism remains an expensive and time-consuming venture that many online news sites, faced with uncertain revenue streams and a growing consumer demand for real-time news updates, are reluctant to bankroll extensively.

Already strapped for funds, news organizations know they have to cater to public demands, and foremost among these demands is speed. When pop-music icon Michael Jackson died on June 26, 2009, at 2:26 p.m., news of his death hit cyberspace by 2:44 p.m. and soon spread nationwide via Twitter. Perhaps surprisingly, the initial report of Jackson's death was released by celebrity gossip website TMZ. Legacy news sources were slower to publish accounts. The *Los Angeles Times*, wary of the sourcing of the story, waited to confirm the news and didn't publish the story on its website until 3:15 p.m., by which time, thanks to the speed of social media, the star's death was already "old news." Scott Collins and Greg Braxton, "TV Misses Out as Gossip Website TMZ Reports Michael Jackson's Death First," *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jun/26/local/me-jackson-media26>.



Source: MPA, The Association of Magazine Media.



Source: Research Dept., Newspaper Association of America

Figure 14.4 American news organizations are losing their audiences to online media and have lost billions in advertising income.

6.2.3.2 Social Responsibility of News Media

In the preamble to its statement of purpose, the Committee of Concerned Journalists lists as the central purpose of journalism “to provide citizens with accurate and reliable information they need to function in a free society.” Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles. This theory of the social responsibility of the press is often referred to as the vital information premise. Though sometimes worded differently by different organizations, it is widely accepted in the journalism community as the foundation for any principles of media ethics. Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 46. What are those specific principles? Here are some that are particularly important for journalists in the current media climate.

6.2.3.3 Present News Stories That Inform and Serve the Needs of Citizens

If the basis for the principles of ethical news reporting is giving citizens the information they need to function in a democratic society, then that information must be presented accurately. Journalists should be careful to verify the facts before they report them. As the Committee of Concerned Journalists asserts, “Accuracy is the foundation upon which everything else is built—context, interpretation, comment, criticism, analysis and debate,” so reliable news sources are essential if citizens are to have a clear understanding of the society in which they live. Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles. Furthermore, although news organizations have a professional responsibility toward advertisers and shareholders, their commitment is always to citizens first. This means that journalists must report the facts truthfully and without omission, even if they are not in the best interest of advertisers, shareholders, or friends.

6.2.3.4 Present Issues Fairly

Reporting issues fairly requires not only factual accuracy, but also lack of favoritism toward any organization, political group, ideology, or other agenda. The Society of Professional Journalists stipulates that journalists should refuse gifts and favors and avoid political involvement or public office if these things compromise journalistic integrity. Society of Professional Journalists, “SPJ Code of Ethics,” <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>. Additionally, journalists should avoid inflating stories for sensation and be as

transparent as possible about their sources of information so that the public can investigate the issues further on their own. Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles.

All sides of an issue should be presented in a news story. Of course, all journalists have a perspective from which they write, but a clear distinction should be made between news reports and editorial content. American Society of News Editors, “ASNE’s Statement of Principles,” August 2009, asne.org/article_view/articleid/325/asnes-statement-of-principles.aspx.

6.2.3.5 Present Stories in a Way That Addresses Their Complexity

Many issues in the news are layered and highly complex. Developing a thorough understanding of issues requires dedication and a sometimes lengthy investigation, and, especially in a world where rapid reporting is the norm, there can be a temptation to gloss over the finer points of an issue for the sake of efficiency. Additionally, most consumers of news, increasingly busy and overwhelmed by the amount of information available, want stories that can be quickly digested and easily comprehended. However, as the Committee of Concerned Journalists points out, the media must balance what readers want with what they need but cannot anticipate. Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles. Oversimplifying issues, whether for the sake of a quick story or to satisfy public tastes, becomes a violation of the vital information premise. Society of Professional Journalists, “SPJ Code of Ethics,” <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>.

6.2.3.6 Present Diverse Perspectives

When discussing what he considers to be one of the key issues in professional journalism, media ethicist Jeremy Iggers points out that because democracy means the widest possible participation of citizens in public life, diversity in journalism is of fundamental importance. Jeremy Iggers, *Good News, Bad News: Journalism Ethics and the Public Interest* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 138. Not only should newsroom staff represent a diversity of gender and races, but journalists should also speak for all groups in society—“not just those with attractive demographics,” as the Committee for Concerned Journalists puts it. Journalists should represent the underrepresented because ignoring citizens is a form of disenfranchisement. Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles.

6.2.3.7 Monitor Government and Corporations

When the framers of the U.S. Constitution guaranteed freedom of the press, one of the things they had in mind was the ability of the news media to serve as a watchdog over those in positions of power. Committee of Concerned Journalists, “Statement of Shared Purpose,” Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles. It is the duty of the press to ensure that business is conducted in the open and that government actions are public. One famous example of the media fulfilling its watchdog role was *The Washington Post*’s investigation of the 1972 Watergate scandal. During Richard Nixon’s presidency, journalists at the *Post* uncovered information linking government agencies and officials to the break-in at the Democratic National Committee headquarters at the Watergate complex as part of an attempt to sabotage the Democratic campaign and guarantee Nixon’s reelection. Richard M. Flanagan and Louis W. Koenig, “Watergate,” in *Dictionary of American History*, ed. Stanley I. Kutler, 3rd ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2003), 8:425. Media coverage of the scandal increased publicity and ultimately put pressure on the government that led to an investigation and the prosecution of many who were involved. “The Government and Watergate,” in *American Decades*, ed. Judith S. Baughman and others (Detroit: Gale, 2001), vol. 8. In the past decade, the media has uncovered incriminating information about various Senators and Congressmen, resulting in charges of corruption, tax evasion, conspiracy, and fraud.

6.2.3.8 Characteristics of Reliable Journalism

While CNN and other news networks took some criticism for their delay in reporting Michael Jackson’s death in 2009, others commended the news organizations for waiting for official confirmation. For many journalists and members of the public, ensuring accuracy, even when it means delays, is a hallmark of responsible journalism.

More than 400 journalistic codes of ethics have been produced by various unions and associations worldwide. Aidan White, *To Tell You the Truth: The Ethical Journalist Initiative* (Brussels: International Federation of Journalists, 2008), iii. Where they may differ on specifics, these codes of ethics agree that the news media’s top obligation is to report the truth. When journalists say this, of

course, they don't mean truth in an absolute, philosophical sense; they mean practical truth, the truth that involves reporting the facts as faithfully and accurately as possible. This notion of truth includes an accurate representation of information from reliable sources, but it also includes a complete representation, one that presents multiple perspectives on an issue and does not suppress vital information.

Many codes of ethics stress that the press has a duty to continue its investigation of the facts, even after initially reporting them, and to rectify any inaccuracies that may have occurred in the initial coverage of an issue. Aidan White, *To Tell You the Truth: The Ethical Journalist Initiative* (Brussels: International Federation of Journalists, 2008), ii; Committee of Concerned Journalists, "Statement of Shared Purpose," Pew Project for Excellence in Journalism, www.journalism.org/resources/principles. One example is *The Huffington Post*, a news website that, with over 2,000 bloggers, has the world's most linked-to blog. Blogging is sometimes criticized by more traditional journalists for the tendency, among some blogs, to include biases, unreliable information, and unfounded opinions—in other words, for instances of violating journalistic codes of ethics. However, *The Huffington Post* requires all of its pass-holding writers to fact-check and to correct any factual errors within 24 hours or lose their privileges. Aidan White, *To Tell You the Truth: The Ethical Journalist Initiative* (Brussels: International Federation of Journalists, 2008), 76.

Along with an emphasis on the truth, codes of ethics stress loyalty and duty to citizens as a standard of primary importance. Of course, truth telling is an essential component of this loyalty, but additionally, the concern here is in reminding journalists whom their work serves. Especially in the current environment, in which media outlets face increased financial pressure, there is a tension between responsible journalism and the demands for profit. Aidan White notes that corporate and political influences are of increasing concern in this environment, but he reminds journalists that while they have duties to other constituencies, "media products are not just economic." Journalists must hold the larger public interest above other interests. Aidan White, *To Tell You the Truth: The Ethical Journalist Initiative* (Brussels: International Federation of Journalists, 2008), 8.

Another challenge often posed by bottom-line concerns and the pressure for a good story is sensitivity toward, and protection of, those involved in the news. Responsible journalists should strive to balance disclosure of the news with a respect for individual privacy. Finding this balance can sometimes be a challenge. On one hand, journalists should never expose private information that could be harmful to individuals for the sake of sensationalizing a story. Issues like family life, sexual behavior, sexual orientation, or medical conditions, for instance, are generally considered tabloid material that would violate the privacy of those involved.

On the other hand, there are times when the private lives of individuals must be made public in the interests of serving the common good. One example was the 2009 media scandal surrounding South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, who, after media investigations over his weeklong disappearance in June of that year, admitted to flying to Argentina to visit his mistress. After it was revealed that Sanford had used public funds for his private travel, he resigned from his office as the chairman of the Republican Governors' Association. Associated Press, "Sanford Took Personal Trips on Plane," *CBS News*, August 9, 2009, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/08/09/politics/main5228211.shtml. Although the publicity surrounding this private matter was clearly painful for the governor and his family, releasing information about the incident, particularly regarding the misuse of public funds, was in the best interest of the citizens. The International Federation of Journalists offers three factors as a rough guideline in cases where privacy is in danger of being violated: the nature of the individual's place in society, the individual's reputation, and his or her place in public life. Politicians, judges, and others in elected office often must forgo their expectations of privacy for reasons of democracy and accountability—the public's right to know if their elected officials are engaged in unethical or criminal conduct generally trumps an individual's right to privacy. Aidan White, *To Tell You the Truth: The Ethical Journalist Initiative* (Brussels: International Federation of Journalists, 2008), 136. These factors, in recent years, have resulted in public scandals surrounding other political leaders—Representative Anthony Weiner, former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and presidential hopeful John Edwards, to name a few.



Figure 14.5 As shown in the scandal surrounding former South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, drawing the line between exploiting individuals' private lives to sell stories and disclosing information in the public interest is not always clear.

Because the press has a duty to serve the best interests of the citizens in a democracy, it is important that journalists act independently and that they remain neutral in their presentation of information. *Objectivity* was once the common term used to support this notion. More recently, however, there has been wider acceptance of the fact that reporting always occurs through a lens of personal experience, culture, beliefs, and background that ultimately all influence the way any individual subjectively perceives a situation. Howard A. Myrick, "The Search for Objectivity in Journalism," *USA Today* (Society for the Advancement of Education), November 2002, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1272/is_2690_131/ai_94384327/?tag=content;col1. If this were not the case—if there were only one standard way everyone perceived, investigated, and reported on a story—what would be the value of including racial and gender diversity in the newsroom? Nevertheless, responsible journalism requires journalists to avoid favoritism and to present news that is fair and offers a complete picture of the issue.

The principle of journalistic independence is an important component of the news media's watchdog role. Journalists should avoid conflicts of interest—financial, political, or otherwise—and, when conflicts of interest are unavoidable, it is a journalist's ethical responsibility to disclose those. Society of Professional Journalists, "SPJ Code of Ethics," <http://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>. One example involving conflict of interest centers on recent talk of government bailouts for the news media, similar to the bailouts for the auto and banking industries. However, many journalists are concerned that government support of this kind would present a conflict of interest and interfere with the media's watchdog role. David Nicklaus, "Bailing Out Journalism Would Threaten Its Independence," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, June 8, 2010, <http://more.stltoday.com/stltoday/business/columnists.nsf/davidnicklaus/story/7db2f5de844ed63f8625773c000da74b?OpenDocument>.

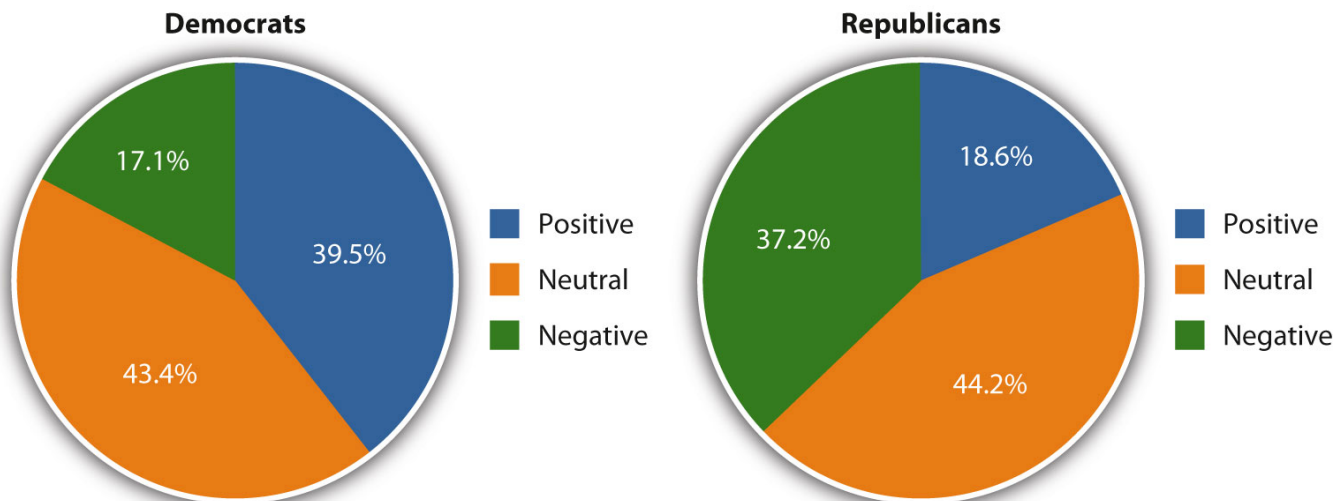
In addition to maintaining independence, the news media should allow for commentary and opposition. Leaving space for citizens to voice concerns about journalistic conduct is an important part of serving the public interest and keeping the public's trust.

6.2.3.9 The Effects of Bias in News Presentations

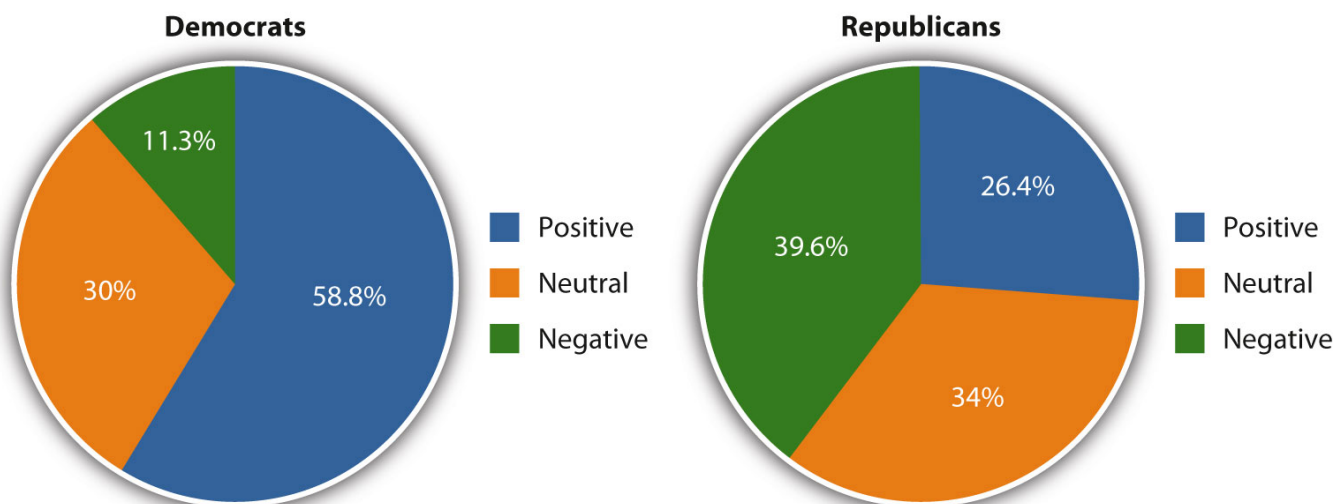
While principles of ethical journalism require journalists to remain neutral in their reporting, there is, as previously mentioned, always a degree of bias that will be present in any news reporting due to the element of personal perspective that any journalist will naturally bring to his or her work. A 2005 in-depth study by political scientists at UCLA found that, of 20 media outlets, 18 had a perspective in their news reporting that was left of the national average. Of those 20, only Fox News and *The Washington Times* scored to the right of the average U.S. voter. Meg Sullivan, “Media Bias is Real, Finds UCLA Political Scientist,” news release, UCLA, December 14, 2005, <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/Media-Bias-Is-Real-Finds-UCLA-6664.aspx>.

What, exactly, does political bias in the media look like? In the UCLA study, news sources were scored based on their sources of information and expert opinion. The news outlets with the most liberal slant—CBS News and *The New York Times*—cited liberal think tanks and policy groups with a much greater frequency than they cited conservative ones. Tim Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, “A Measure of Media Bias,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120, no. 4 (2005), <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/groseclose/pdfs/MediaBias.pdf>. Political bias can also be observed by examining which stories a network or newspaper chooses to report. According to media analyst Seth Ackerman, the right-leaning Fox News network reports news stories that favor the Republican Party or show the Democratic Party in a negative light. Additionally, Fox’s panels of pundits who offer commentary after the news tend to be politically conservative or moderate far more often than liberal. Seth Ackerman, “The Most Biased Name in the News,” *FAIR: Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting*, July/August 2001, <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1067>.

Tone of Network Evening News Coverage by Party (% of all stories)



Tone of Newspaper Coverage by Party (% of all stories)



Source: Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism

Figure 14.6 Some argue that there is a politically left bias in the news media.

Such biases in news media may have an effect on public opinion. However, while the picture a journalist or particular news outlet creates may not be entirely objective, journalists with integrity will strive to be fair and comprehensive, offering opposing views and citing their sources of information. Members of the public should remember that they also have a responsibility to be active, rather than passive, consumers of information. Good media consumers use critical analysis skills while reading news reports. If a story is presented conscientiously in the news, a reader or viewer will have the resources he or she needs to research an issue further and draw his or her own conclusions. As you continue reading the chapter, keep in mind the ethical obligations of those who work in mass media and the potential consequences of their failure to uphold them.

Key Takeaways

- The Internet has brought about profound and rapid changes in the structuring, delivery, and economics of news media.
 - Immediate news delivery has become the norm.
 - The pressure for immediate delivery increases the tension between factual accuracy and “getting there first” in news reporting.

- Because people can get instant news for free online, subscriptions to print media are down, and so are advertising revenues.
- Most journalistic codes of ethics are based on the premise that the news media exists to provide citizens with the information they need to function in a free and democratic society. Journalists should conform to several ethical obligations:
 - Present news stories that inform and serve the needs of citizens.
 - Present issues fairly.
 - Present stories in a way that addresses their complexity.
 - Present diverse perspectives.
 - Monitor government and corporations.
- Responsible journalism:
 - Ensures accuracy (even if it means causing delays)
 - Reports the truth
 - Stays loyal to citizens by putting the public interest above all else
 - Is protective and sensitive to those involved in the news
 - Remains objective and presents information in a neutral way
 - Allows for commentary and opposition
- All news stories contain some bias because of the diversity of journalists' perspectives. While the news media is often criticized for representing a political bias in reporting, ethical journalists always strive to present issues in a fair and comprehensive way.

? Exercise 6.2.3.1

Conduct your own survey of political bias in the news. Choose either a television network or newspaper known for more liberal tendencies, such as CNN or *The New York Times*, and a network or newspaper known for more conservative reporting, such as Fox News or *The Washington Times*. Examine both sources' coverage of the same news story (*not* a column or editorial). Then answer the following short-answer questions. Each response should be one to two paragraphs.

1. What differences do you notice between the two sources' news coverage?
2. What evidence, if any, do you find of political bias? If it does exist, what effect do you think this bias has on readers?
3. Consider the role of the media in delivering news to the public. In your opinion, can both sources' coverage still be characterized as fair and accurate? Why or why not?

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Learning Objectives

- Explain concerns related to surveillance and personal privacy rights introduced by the Internet.
- Differentiate between copyright infringement and fair use.
- Identify plagiarism and copyright concerns introduced by the Internet.

Online media has developed rapidly, with technology advancing at a rate that often surpasses the ability of legislation and policy to keep up with it. As a result, issues like individuals' rights to privacy, copyright protections, and fair use restrictions have become the subject of numerous court cases and public debates as lawmakers, judges, and civil liberties organizations struggle to define the limits of technology and the access it provides to previously restricted information. In the following section you will look at some of the most prominent issues in today's online media environment. We have already considered some of the legal questions surrounding these issues. Here, you should reflect on the ethical issues in mass media raised in the two preceding sections and how they are manifested in the areas of personal privacy, copyright law, and plagiarism.

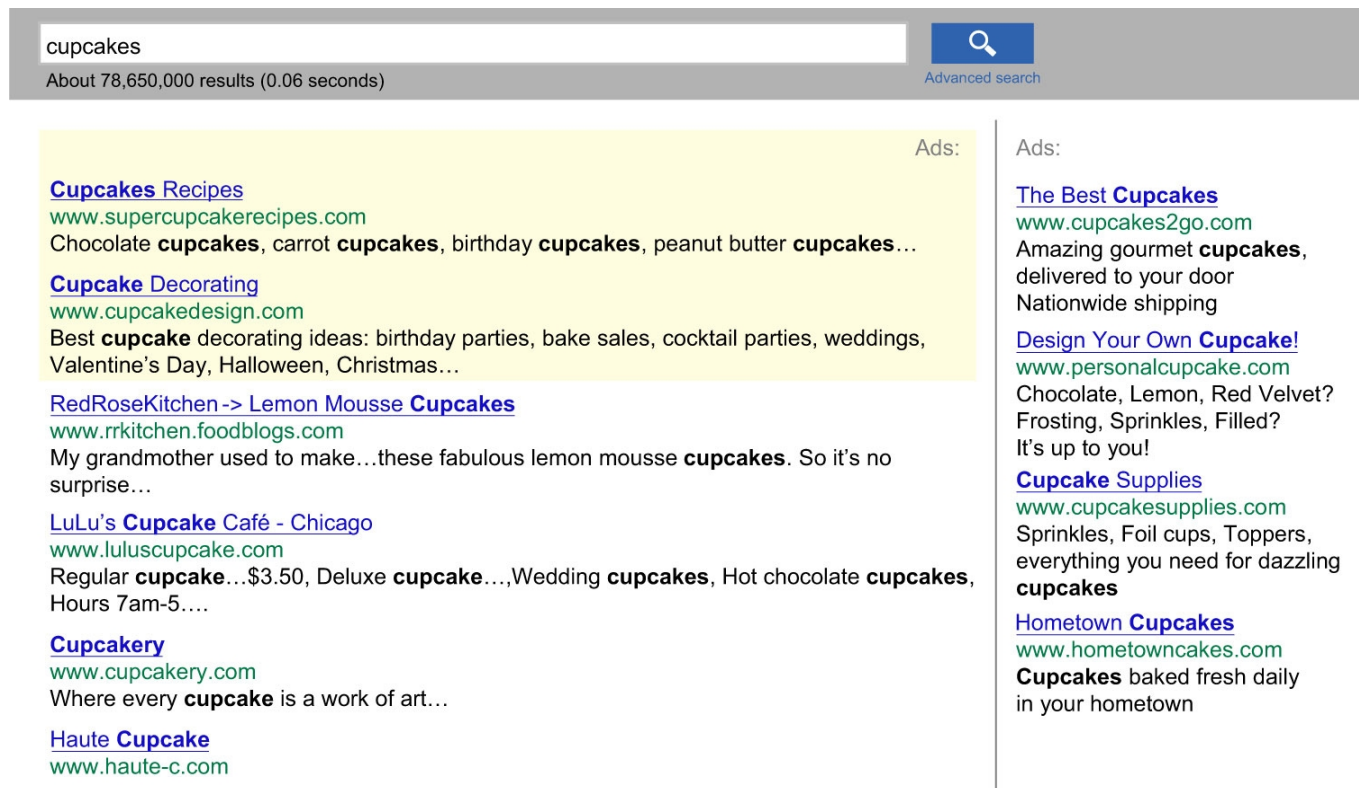
6.2.4.1 Privacy and Surveillance

Concerns about online privacy issues in recent years have led some people to wonder whether the collection of personal information on websites has begun to infringe on individuals' constitutional rights. While the U.S. Constitution does not explicitly guarantee a general right to privacy, the Bill of Rights establishes privacy of beliefs, privacy of the home, and privacy of person and possessions from unreasonable searches. Additionally, in a number of court cases, the "right to liberty" clause has also been read as a guarantee of personal privacy. Doug Linder, "The Right of Privacy," *Exploring Constitutional Law*, 2010, www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/rightofprivacy.html. What do these constitutional rights mean when it comes to storing a person's credit card data online, or tracking his or her Internet searches, or using cookies to collect information about his or her purchasing habits? Because online media is developing so rapidly, many of these issues have not been settled by federal legislation and remain the source of numerous courtroom battles. Consider the 2010 case in which the online services company Yahoo! entered into a legal struggle with government officials who wanted to search the email account of a Yahoo! user for incriminating evidence. While Yahoo! claimed the government would need a search warrant to access a user's email, the government investigators claimed the Fourth Amendment does not apply in the case of an email account. Electronic Frontier Foundation, "EFF Backs Yahoo! to Protect User from Warrantless Email Search," news release, April 14, 2010, <http://www.eff.org/press/archives/2010/04/13>. Many college students reveal much about themselves on Facebook; they sometimes are chagrined to learn that future employers sometimes will view this information.

In defense of information collection and surveillance, many websites argue that, by using their services, individuals are agreeing to make their personal information available. However, many people don't realize the extent of surveillance capabilities or know how to protect certain personal information while using online tools. The more people rely on the Internet for shopping, communication, social networking, and media consumption, the more their personal data is stored online. Every time a person subscribes to a magazine, joins an organization, donates money to charity, gives to a political cause, or searches the pages of a government agency, that information is stored in a computer. Privacy Rights Clearinghouse, "Privacy Today: A Review of Current Issues," March 2010, www.privacyrights.org/ar/Privacy-IssuesList.htm#publicrecords. For example, cookies, text files that web page servers embed in users' hard drives, help search engines like Google and Yahoo! track their customers' search histories, buying habits, and browsing patterns. Cookies stored by Google last for 30 years. Maria Godoy, "Google Records Subpoena Raises Privacy Fears," *NPR*, January 20, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5165854>. These search engine cookies are used to customize users' searches and to deliver customized third-party ads based on a particular user's demographics and behavior. However, privacy advocates claim this practice fosters predatory advertising. Tom Spring, "Good-Bye to Privacy?" *PC World*, May 23, 2010, http://www.pcworld.com/article/196787/goodbye_to_privacy.html. Additionally, considering that search engines receive multiple requests per day for specific information on their users (requests that are often tied to criminal investigations and lawsuits), there is a growing concern that unfair or even erroneous profiling may result. Maria Godoy, "Google Records Subpoena Raises Privacy Fears," *NPR*, January 20, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5165854>. Much of this information is stored without users' knowledge or informed consent—although agreements for most software inform users when their data is being collected, few people have the patience or time to read and understand the dense legalistic language of these

agreements. And even when users invest the time and effort to understand the agreements, they are left with the difficult choice of either agreeing to have their data recorded or going without useful software.

Internet users concerned about their privacy may also be unaware of another growing trend: the combination of online data with offline information to build profiles of web surfers. Data providers like BlueKai, Datalogic, and Nielsen are now able to pool offline data and demographics to create “digital dossiers” (detailed digital records of a particular subject or market) for online advertisers who want to reach a target market. Tom Spring, “Good-Bye to Privacy?” *PC World*, May 23, 2010, http://www.pcworld.com/article/196787/goodbye_to_privacy.html. This combination of online and offline information provides a nearly complete picture of someone’s life. If advertisers are looking for a 56-year-old retired female educator who is divorced, owns a home and a dog, suffers from arthritis, and plays tennis at the local fitness club, they can now find her. While advertisers have been careful to point out that people are identified by demographic subgroup but never by name, many organizations that advocate for privacy, such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation, believe that protections and greater transparency should be enforced. Tom Spring, “Good-Bye to Privacy?” *PC World*, May 23, 2010, http://www.pcworld.com/article/196787/goodbye_to_privacy.html.



The screenshot shows a Google search interface with the query "cupcakes". Below the search bar, it indicates "About 78,650,000 results (0.06 seconds)". To the right of the search bar is a magnifying glass icon and the text "Advanced search". Below the search results, there are two columns of advertisements, each labeled "Ads:".

Left Column of Ads:

- Cupcakes Recipes**
www.supercupcakerecipes.com
Chocolate **cupcakes**, carrot **cupcakes**, birthday **cupcakes**, peanut butter **cupcakes**...
- Cupcake Decorating**
www.cupcakedesign.com
Best **cupcake** decorating ideas: birthday parties, bake sales, cocktail parties, weddings, Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas...
- RedRoseKitchen -> Lemon Mousse Cupcakes**
www.rkitchen.foodblogs.com
My grandmother used to make...these fabulous lemon mousse **cupcakes**. So it's no surprise...
- LuLu's Cupcake Café - Chicago**
www.luluscupcake.com
Regular **cupcake**...\$3.50, Deluxe **cupcake**..., Wedding **cupcakes**, Hot chocolate **cupcakes**, Hours 7am-5....
- Cupcakery**
www.cupcakery.com
Where every **cupcake** is a work of art...
- Haute Cupcake**
www.haute-c.com

Right Column of Ads:

- The Best Cupcakes**
www.cupcakes2go.com
Amazing gourmet **cupcakes**, delivered to your door
Nationwide shipping
- Design Your Own Cupcake!**
www.personalcupcake.com
Chocolate, Lemon, Red Velvet? Frosting, Sprinkles, Filled? It's up to you!
- Cupcake Supplies**
www.cupcakesupplies.com
Sprinkles, Foil cups, Toppers, everything you need for dazzling **cupcakes**
- Hometown Cupcakes**
www.hometowncakes.com
Cupcakes baked fresh daily in your hometown

Figure 14.7 Online ads like these target users based on pools of very specific information.

Users also supply a wide range of information about themselves through online social networks that is connected with their names, contact information, and photographs. Creditors now look at individuals’ social networks to determine whether they would be good credit customers, and banks may access social network information to make loan decisions. Ginny Mies, “Skeptical Shopper: Can Your Online Life Ruin Your Credit?” *PC World*, March 23, 2010, http://www.pcworld.com/article/192207/skeptical_shopper_can_your_online_life_ruin_your_credit.html. If users aren’t careful about their privacy settings on MySpace, Twitter, or Facebook, photographs and other private information may be easily accessible to anyone performing a Google search. Of even greater concern is the growing trend to publicize information that was previously private as the networking sites evolve and change their interfaces.

Surveillance can range from the monitoring of online activity by employers and other institutions that want to make sure users are following guidelines, to high-level government investigations of terrorist activity. The USA PATRIOT Act, passed just 6 weeks after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, expanded the federal government’s rights to access citizens’ personal information. Under the Patriot Act, authorities have access to personal records held by Internet service providers and other third parties, and

government officials can tap in to an individual's email communications and web searches if he or she is suspected of terrorist activity or of having connections to terrorist activity. American Civil Liberties Union, "Surveillance Under the USA PATRIOT Act," April 3, 2003, www.aclu.org/national-security/surveillance-under-usa-patriot-act; Stefanie Olsen, "Patriot Act Draws Privacy Concerns," *CNET*, October 26, 2001, <http://news.cnet.com/2100-1023-275026.html>. One concern among civil liberties organizations is that the Patriot Act might become a back door for the government to conduct undisclosed surveillance that doesn't necessarily involve the threat of terrorism. For instance, under the Patriot Act the government can wiretap Internet communications even if the primary purpose is a criminal investigation, as long as intelligence gathering is a significant purpose of the investigation. Berkman Center for Internet and Society, "The USA Patriot Act, Foreign Intelligence Surveillance, and Cyberspace Privacy," Harvard Law School, <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/privacy/module5.html>.

6.2.4.2 Fair Use and Plagiarism

Now that a large amount of research can easily be conducted online, and content can be copied and pasted from one platform to another with no more than the click of a button, concerns about plagiarism and copyright infringement are more relevant than ever. The concepts of copyright infringement and plagiarism can easily be confused with each another. The following provides an overview of copyright, its issues and limitations, and its distinction from plagiarism.

6.2.4.3 Copyright Infringement

Copyright is a form of protection provided by U.S. law, under which the creator of an original artistic or intellectual work is automatically granted certain rights, including the right to distribute, copy, and modify the work. U.S. Copyright Office, "Copyright Basics," <http://www.copyright.gov/>. If someone rents a movie from Netflix, for example, and watches it with his friends, he hasn't violated any copyright laws because Netflix has paid for a license to loan the movie to its customers. However, if the same person rents a movie and burns himself a copy to watch later, he has violated copyright law because he has not paid for nor obtained the film creators' permission to copy the movie. Copyright law applies to most books, songs, movies, art, essays, and other pieces of creative work. However, after a certain length of time (70 to 120 years depending on the publication circumstances), creative and intellectual works enter the public domain; that is, they are free to be used and copied without permission.

Google Books: Turning Copyright Law on Its Head?

In 2002, Google began scanning millions of books in academic libraries to make them available online in digital format. Of the more than 12 million books Google has digitized since then—and made searchable through Google Book Search—2 million are in the public domain. Those 2 million books are available in "full view" and free for users to download, while books still under copyright are available as limited previews, where users can access about 20 percent of the texts. According to Google, the project will pave the way for greater democratization of knowledge, making texts available to readers who formerly wouldn't have had access to them. However, many authors, publishers, and legal authorities claim the project represents a massive copyright violation. In 2005, the Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers filed class-action lawsuits against Google. Annalee Newitz, "5 Ways the Google Books Settlement Will Change the Future of Reading," *io9* (blog). April 2, 2010, <http://io9.com/5501426/5-ways-the-google-book-settlement-will-change-the-future-of-reading>.

William Cavanaugh, a lawyer with the U.S. Department of Justice, claims that the Google Books Settlement, an agreement partially reached in 2008, "turns copyright law on its head." According to the settlement agreement, in exchange for \$125 million, part of which would go to authors and publishers, Google was released from liability for copying the books and was granted the right to charge money for individual and institutional subscriptions to its Google Books service (which gives subscribers full access to the copied books—even those under copyright). Authors have the choice to opt out of the agreement, asking to have their books removed from Google's servers. However, more than 30,000 publishers have already made deals with Google, which override the authors' rights to opt out. Norman Oder, "Google Settlement Fairness Hearing, Part Two: DOJ Expresses Opposition; Parties Mount Vigorous Defense," *Library Journal*, February 18, 2010, <http://www.libraryjournal.com/article/CA6719808.html>.

Some works are in the public domain because the creator has chosen to make them available to anyone without requiring permission. However, most works are in the public domain because their copyright has expired; in the United States, anything published before 1923 is automatically in the public domain. Additionally, there have been changes to U.S. copyright law over the

years that caused some works to enter the public domain earlier. Before 1964, for instance, any published work had to have its copyright renewed during the 28th year after its publication. If no renewal was filed, the copyright was lost. Figure 14.8 shows significant changes to U.S. copyright law since 1790. Nolo Press, “Chapter 8: The Public Domain,” Stanford University Libraries and Academic Information Resources, 2007, http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter8/index.html.

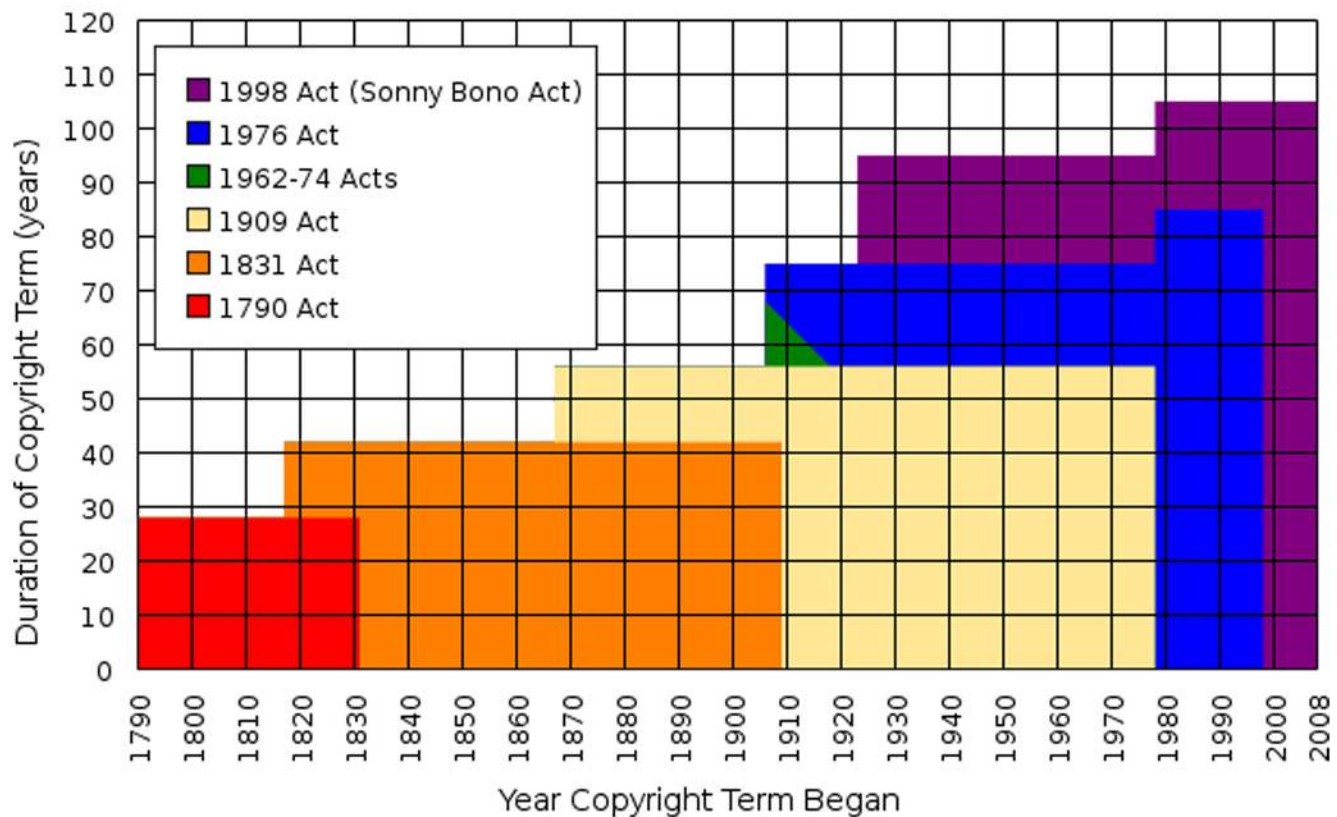


Figure 14.8 Changes to U.S. Copyright Law

While it is illegal to violate the rights granted by copyright law, the copyright holder’s rights are not unlimited. One of the significant limitations is the policy of “fair use,” under which the public is entitled to freely use copyrighted information for purposes such as criticism, commentary, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, research, or parody. U.S. Copyright Office, “Fair Use,” May 2009, <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>. If a critic were writing a book review for a magazine, for instance, according to fair use, she would be allowed to summarize and quote from the book she wanted to review, whether or not the author of the book agreed to this use. According to the U.S. government, there are four issues to consider when determining fair use:

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such use is of commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes
 2. The nature of the copyrighted work
 3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole
 4. The effect of the use on the potential market for, or value of, the copyrighted work
- U.S. Copyright Office, “Fair Use,” May 2009, <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>.

The distinction between what is considered fair and what constitutes copyright infringement is not always clearly defined. For one thing, there are no guidelines that specify a number of words, lines, or notes that can be taken without permission. Table 14.1 provides some examples of distinctions between fair use and copyright infringement.

Fair Use	Not Fair Use
Wright v. Warner Books Inc. (1991): In a biography of Richard Wright the biographer quoted from 6 of Wright’s unpublished letters and 10 unpublished journal entries. CONSIDERATIONS: The copied letters amounted to less than 1 percent of Wright’s total letter material. Additionally, the biographer’s purpose in copying the documents was informational.	Castle Rock Entertainment Inc. v. Carol Publication Group (1998): Carol Publication published a book of trivia questions about the television series <i>Seinfeld</i>. The book included direct quotes from the show and based its questions on characters and events in the series. CONSIDERATIONS: The book infringed on the ability of Castle Rock (the copyright holder) to make its own trivia books.
Perfect 10 Inc. v. Amazon.com Inc. (2007): A Google search engine displayed thumbnail-sized photos of nude models from a subscription-only website. CONSIDERATIONS: The search engine’s use of the photos transformed them into “pointers,” directing users to the photos’ original source. The transformative use was more important than any factors that would allow Google to make money from displaying the images.	Los Angeles News Service v. KCAL-TV Channel 9 (1997): A television news station used a 30-second segment of a four-minute video that depicted the beating of a Los Angeles man. The video was copyrighted by the Los Angeles News Service. CONSIDERATIONS: The segment used by the news station was a significant portion of the total video. Additionally, the use was for commercial reasons and infringed on the Los Angeles News Service’s ability to market the video.

Table 14.1 Cases Involving Fair Use Source: Stanford University Libraries. “Copyright & Fair Use.”

http://fairuse.stanford.edu/Copyright_and_Fair_Use_Overview/chapter9/9-c.html

6.2.4.4 Plagiarism

Sometimes plagiarism becomes confused with copyright violation. However, the two words are not synonymous; while there can be some overlap between them, not every instance of plagiarism involves copyright violation, and not every instance of copyright violation is an act of plagiarism. For one thing, while copyright violation can involve a wide range of acts, plagiarism is defined more narrowly as using someone else’s information, writing, or speech without properly documenting or citing the source. In other words, plagiarism involves representing another person’s work as one’s own. This can happen in any field—for example, in the music industry. In 1990, Vanilla Ice sampled riffs from David Bowie’s *Under Pressure* for his hit song, *Ice Ice Baby*, without licensing or crediting Bowie’s work. Hip hop music, which has a long tradition of “sampling” music, riffs, lyrics, and more from other songs, often raises questions of copyright infringement. Copyright Website, “David Bowie, Queen and Vanilla Ice,” www.benedict.com/Audio/Vanilla/Vanilla.aspx.

As the U.S. Copyright Office points out, it is possible to cite a copyrighted source of information without obtaining permission to reproduce that information. U.S. Copyright Office, “Fair Use,” May 2009, <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>. In such a case, the user has violated copyright law even though she has not plagiarized the material. Similarly, a student writing a paper could copy sections of a document that is in the public domain without properly citing his sources, in which case he would not have broken any copyright laws. However, representing the information as his own work would be an instance of plagiarism.

Plagiarism, a perennially serious problem at academic institutions, has recently become even more prevalent. The ease of copying and pasting online content into a word-processing document can make it highly tempting for students to plagiarize material for research projects and critical papers. Additionally, a number of online “paper mills” contain archives where students can download papers for free or, in some cases, purchase them. Andy Denhart, “The Web’s Plagiarism Police,” *Salon*, June 14, 1999, www.salon.com/technology/feature/1999/06/14/plagiarism. Sloppy work habits can lead students to inadvertently plagiarize. In 2003, *The New York Times* surveyed students at 23 college campuses and reported that 38 percent of students admitted to having committed copy-and-paste plagiarism within the previous year. Michelle De Leon, “Internet Plagiarism on the Rise in Colleges,” *Lehigh University Brown and White*, November 12, 2007, media.www.thebrownandwhite.com/media/storage/paper1233/news/2007/11/12/News/Internet.Plagiarism.On.The.Rise.In.Colleges-3094622.shtml.

To combat the rise in plagiarism, many schools and universities now subscribe to services that allow instructors to check students’ work for plagiarized material. Plagiarism.org, for instance, offers an analytics tool that compares student writing against a database that includes work from online paper mills, academic databases, documents available through major search engines, and other

student papers submitted to Plagiarism.org. Andy Denhart, “The Web’s Plagiarism Police,” *Salon*, June 14, 1999, www.salon.com/technology/feature/1999/06/14/plagiarism. According to many researchers, part of the issue may be that students don’t understand what constitutes plagiarism. Some students, for instance, claim they think information available online is in the public domain. Nicole J. Auer and Ellen M. Krupar, “Mouse Click Plagiarism: The Role of Technology in Plagiarism and the Librarian’s Role in Combating It,” *Library Trends*, Winter 2001, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1387/is_3_49/ai_75278304/. Figure 14.12 offers suggestions for ways to avoid plagiarism in your own work.

6.2.4.4.1 Ways to Avoid Plagiarism

- Don’t procrastinate.
- Avoid taking shortcuts.
- Take thorough notes and keep accurate records.
- Rephrase ideas in your own words.
- Provide citations or attributions for all sources.
- Ask your instructor when in doubt. Longman Publishers, “Avoiding Plagiarism,” Pearson Education, wps.pearsoncustom.com/pcp_longman_ap_2/32/8420/2155775.cw/content/index.html.

While plagiarism is an issue of concern in academia, it occurs in print media as well. Writers, whether through carelessness or laziness, may lift content from existing materials without properly citing or reinterpreting them. In an academic setting, plagiarism may lead to consequences as severe as failure or even expulsion from an institution. However, outside of academia the consequences may be even more damaging. Writers have lost publishing contracts, permanently damaged their reputations, and even ruined their careers over instances of plagiarism. For example, the late George Harrison, of the Beatles, was successfully sued by Ronald Mack for copyright infringement of his song “He’s So Fine.” *Bright Tunes Music v. Harrisongs Music*, 420 F. Supp. 177 (S.D.N.Y. 1976). It was determined by the court that Harrison unconsciously plagiarized the musical essence of Mack’s song for his composition “My Sweet Lord.”

You should now have an understanding of the key issues in media ethics, particularly as they relate to privacy rights, plagiarism, and copyright laws. Please ensure you understand the following listed key concepts.

Key Takeaways

- Concerns about the public’s right to privacy have increased in recent years, as more personal information has become available online.
 - Every time someone makes a purchase, performs a web search, accesses a web page, downloads files, sends an email, or engages in social networking, that information is stored in a computer and may be accessed by third parties under certain conditions.
 - The USA PATRIOT Act, passed after the September 11, 2001, attacks, has broadened the federal government’s rights to access individuals’ personal records.
 - Civil liberties organizations are concerned about clauses of the Patriot Act, such as the one that stipulates that the government can wiretap Internet communications as long as intelligence gathering is a significant purpose of the investigation.
- Rules that distinguish copyright violation from fair use are not always entirely clear and have been the subject of debate now that a greater amount of copyrighted work is easily accessible via the Internet.
 - Works enter the public domain once their copyright has expired, at which point they can be altered, copied, and distributed freely.
 - Because of numerous changes in U.S. copyright laws, some works have entered the public domain earlier than others.
 - According to the U.S. government, when distinguishing between fair use and copyright infringement, there are four things to consider: whether or not the use is for profit, the nature of the copyrighted work, the percentage of the copyrighted material being used, and the effect of that use on the value of the copyrighted work.

- Plagiarism is also a growing concern because of the ease of copying and pasting texts from online sources into computer documents. It is important to keep in mind that plagiarism and copyright infringement are different issues: plagiarism involves not giving credit to a work's creator, whereas copyright deals with the legality of using a created work.

? Exercise 6.2.4.1

You will now examine several cases in detail to further explore your understanding of the concepts and key ideas covered in this chapter. Respond to the questions asked, and provide evidence or examples to defend and support your answer. Each response should be one or two paragraphs.

Case 1. Research the USA PATRIOT Act. You can read what the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has to say about the act here: http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/safefree/patriot_report_20090310.pdf. You can read what the federal government has to say about the act here: <http://www.justice.gov/archive/ll/highlights.htm>

- What are its major stipulations?
- What are some major concerns of civil liberties advocates?
- Do you agree with the ACLU that “the Patriot Act eroded our most basic right—the freedom from unwarranted government intrusion into our private lives?” Or do you agree with the acronym the federal government created to explain the act: Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USAPATRIOT)? Explain your reasons.

Case 2. Consider the following case and decide whether you believe it represents an instance of fair use or whether the action was a copyright violation. Defend your response.

After the publication of author J. K. Rowling's popular *Harry Potter* novels, one fan created an elaborate website for Harry Potter enthusiasts. The website includes an encyclopedia of information about the books; indexed lists of people, places, and things; fan art; discussion forums; essays; timelines; and other features. Much of the content of the website's encyclopedia entries comes directly from the books. Use of the website is free and unrestricted, and while the site includes some ads, the income they generate only goes to offset the site's operating costs.

- Decide whether you believe the website represents an instance of fair use or whether the action was a copyright violation. Defend your response.

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Write a detailed response to the questions below, defending your response with examples where appropriate. Each response should be one to two paragraphs:
 1. Why was the NAACP unhappy with the schedule of programs for the 1999 season of major television network entertainment?
 2. List at least four common characteristics of the way women are often presented in TV and movie entertainment.
 3. Why is it considered problematic that so few women and ethnic minorities are represented “behind the scenes” in the creation of mass-media products?
 4. Explain how mass media as socialization agents relate to public attitudes toward sexual behavior.
2. Write a detailed response to the questions below, defending your response with examples where appropriate. Each response should be one to two paragraphs:
 1. How does online news content put added pressure on news organizations?
 2. Explain the media's watchdog role.
 3. When is it considered acceptable for journalists to expose details about an individual's private life?
 4. How does political bias influence the way news gets presented?
3. Write a detailed response to the questions below, defending your response with examples where appropriate. Each response should be one to two paragraphs:

1. Identify cookies. Why are cookies a concern for privacy advocates?
2. What are some reasons a created work might be in the public domain?
3. List the four considerations the federal government lists for determining whether an action is fair use or copyright violation.
4. Give an example of an act that could be considered plagiarism but not copyright violation.

? Critical Thinking Questions

Answer the following critical thinking questions. Your responses should be one to two pages for each prompt.

1. Watch segments of the evening news on three of the major television networks. Based on the information presented here about representations of women and racial minorities, what do you observe? Do your observations corroborate claims of stereotyping and underrepresentation? Do you notice important differences among the three networks where these issues are concerned?
2. Create a mock advertisement that breaks with common racial stereotypes, gender myths, or media representations of sexuality.
3. A number of prominent journalists and news experts have argued that the newspaper industry must find a new model for generating revenue if it hopes to survive. Create a short proposal in which you outline a plan for newspaper agencies to earn money from sources other than subscriptions and print advertising.
4. Develop an argument in which you defend the use of information gathering and profiling for the placement of Internet ads and the creation of customized web pages.
5. What might be some implications of the Google Books settlement? Why do you think William Cavanaugh claimed that it “turns copyright law on its head”?

📌 Career Connection

Political Blogger

Research what it takes to be a professional political blogger for a news site like CNN.com or *The Huffington Post*. Then answer the following short-answer questions. Each response should be one to two paragraphs.

1. How much and what kind of research would you need to perform on a daily basis?
2. Where would you go for your information?
3. What are some elements that make for a successful blog?
4. What are some particular ethical concerns surrounding this form of journalism?

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7.1: Understanding Media and Information Quality in an Age of Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Algorithms and Machine Learning

7.2: Issues and Trends

7.3: Fake News and Fake Solutions- How Do We Build a Civics of Trust?

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By [Yochai Benkler](#), [Robert Faris](#), [Hal Roberts](#), and [Nikki Bourassa](#)

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This post looks at some of the lessons we've learned over the last year in our work as part of the Ethics and Governance of AI Initiative, a collaboration of the Berkman Klein Center and the MIT Media Lab. [Learn more](#).

Democracy is under stress that would have been unimaginable a decade or two ago. The victory of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential campaign and the successful “Leave” campaign in the UK Brexit referendum led the Oxford English Dictionary to select “post-truth” as word of the year for 2016. Since then, anti-elite populism across the North Atlantic has continued to gain victories, chief among them the 2018 victory of the Five Star Movement in Italy. As governments, foundations, academics, political activists, journalists, and civil society in democratic societies struggled to understand the overwhelming political results alongside the apparent information disorder, most observers’ eyes fell on technology. Social media, bots, hyper-targeted behavioral marketing—all have been seen as culprits or at least catalysts in public conversations. Technology has altered the foundations of news and media, and as trust in media continues to decline, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and algorithms have come to play a critical role not only as threats to the integrity and quality of media, but also as a source of potential solutions.

The core threats to information quality associated with AI include:

- **Algorithmic curation.** Most commonly known as the “filter bubble” concern, algorithms designed by platforms to keep users engaged produce ever-more refined rabbit holes down which users can go in a dynamic of reinforcement learning that leads them to ever-more extreme versions of their beliefs and opinions.
- **Bots.** Improvements in automation allow bots to become ever-more-effective simulations of human participants, thereby permitting propagandists to mount large-scale influence campaigns on social media by simulating larger and harder-to-detect armies of automated accounts.
- **Fake reports and videos.** Improving automated news reporting and manipulation of video and audio may enable the creation of seemingly authentic videos of political actors that will irrevocably harm their reputations and become high-powered vectors for false reporting.
- **Targeted behavioral marketing powered by algorithms and machine-learning.** Here, the concern is that the vast amounts of individually-identifiable data about users will allow ever-improving algorithms to refine the stream of content that individuals receive so as to manipulate their political opinions and behaviors.

Our approach to this set of issues is through the analysis of very large datasets, covering millions of stories, tweets, and Facebook shares, across diverse platforms reflecting national presidential politics in America from April 2015 to the present. The results of our work suggest that emphasizing the particular and technological, rather than the interaction of technology, institutions, and culture in a particular historical context, may lead to systematic overstating of the importance of technology, both positive and negative. Many studies do not attempt to address the impact of AI and other technologically-mediated phenomena that they identify and measure, but rather are focused on identifying and describing observable practices. In our own work, we have repeatedly found bots, Russian influence campaigns, and “fake news” of the nihilistic political clickbait variety; in all these contexts, we have found these technologically-mediated phenomena to be background noise, rather than a major driver of the observed patterns of political communication. Excessive attention to these technology-centric phenomena risks masking the real political-cultural dynamics that have confounded American political communication.

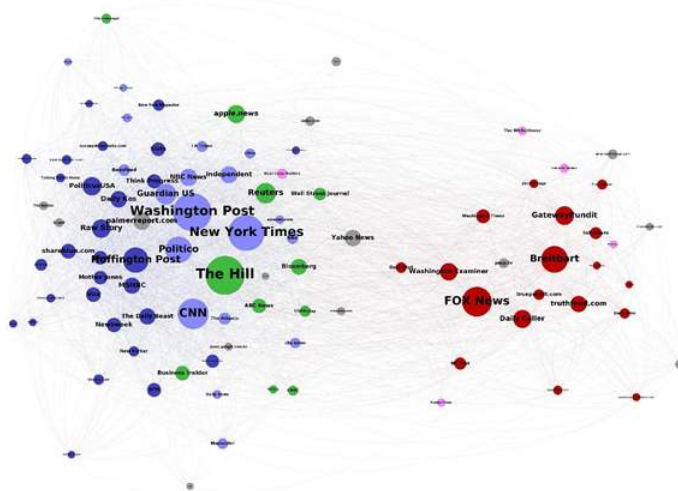
7.1.0.1 Studying media ecosystems

We study propaganda and disinformation in political communication through the lens of media ecosystems. The springboard for our research is a tool built in a decade-long collaboration between our Berkman Klein Center team and our colleagues at MIT Media Lab’s Center for Civic Media: [Media Cloud](#). Media Cloud enables us to discover media network structures that form around specific topics and to shed light on media frames, attention, and influence. Our early work centered on discrete legislative and regulatory controversies, such as [net neutrality](#) and the [SOPA-PIPA bills](#). As election year approached in 2016 we turned our attention to the presidential race.

Initially, we analyzed the 18 months leading up to the November 8 vote. The [Columbia Journalism Review](#) published our preliminary findings in February 2017, and we followed with a more complete [analysis of pre-election media](#) in August of last year. Since then we have expanded our research to include analysis of the election's aftermath, and have combined the election-period study with a review of the first year of the Trump presidency into a book coming out with Oxford University Press in September 2018, entitled *Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics*. With the support of the [Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence Fund](#), we focused attention on the impact of artificial intelligence and automation on political public media. This work is motivated by the need to better understand the character, scope, and origins of the issue as an essential element in crafting corrective measures. Here we summarize our preliminary conclusions as well as the work of a growing number of researchers investing in this space.

7.1.0.1 Disinformation problems are fundamentally political and social—not technological

Our research leads us to conclude that political and social factors, not technology, are at the root of current media and information quality problems in American political communication. We analyze the linking, tweeting, Facebook sharing, and text of four million stories related to presidential politics published over a period of nearly three years before and after the 2016 presidential election. Relying on this data, we mapped out media source networks in open web media (online news, blogs, etc.) and on Twitter to learn how media sources clumped together based on similar cross-media linking and sharing patterns. This revealed a startling finding: media sources are, as many have observed, deeply polarized; but they are aligned in a distinctly asymmetric pattern. There is, as it turns out, not a simple left-right division in American political media. Instead, the divide is between the right and the rest of the political media spectrum. Media sources ranging from those with editorial voices that lean towards the center-right, such as the Wall Street Journal, all the way to distinctly left voices such as Mother Jones or the Daily Kos, comprise a single interconnected media ecosystem. In this portion of the media spectrum, attention is normally distributed around a peak focus on mainstream professional journalism outlets and journalistic values and mainstream professional journalism continue to exercise significant constraint on the survivability and spread of falsehoods. By contrast, there is a large gap between media sources in this broad center to center-left to left cluster and media sources on the right. Moreover, attention on the right increases as one moves further from the center, and peaks around media sites that are exclusively right-wing.



■ Left
 ■ Center-Left
 ■ Center
 ■ Center-Right
 ■ Right

Network map based on Twitter media sharing from January 22, 2017, to January 21, 2018. Nodes are sized by number of Twitter shares.

When we took a closer look at the substance and practices of journalism from the center of the spectrum to its poles, we found major differences in behavior. Media sources on the left and right extremes of the spectrum are prone to sacrificing accuracy in favor of partisan messaging, making them also prone to the spread of disinformation. However, the accountability and fact-checking mechanisms in the media structures on the center and center-left provide a barrier against further propagation and a check on shoddy reporting from the left. Media outlets that strive for objectivity and balance are less susceptible to spreading disinformation.

The leading media in the right-wing cluster follow a distinctly different strategy, and repeatedly amplify and accredit, rather than dampen or correct, bias-confirming falsehoods and misleading framings of facts. We find that insular conservative media lack the will or capacity to adhere to objectivity and accuracy in their reporting. Infowars, Gateway Pundit, and conservative political clickbait are a problem, but a bigger problem is when Drudge Report, Breitbart, and Fox News—conservative media sources with much larger audiences—amplify conspiratorial and deceptive stories. This creates a significant gap in information quality for readers of conservative-leaning sources of news relative to those who consume media sources outside the right-wing ecosystem, including left-wing sites.

7.1.0.0.1 Algorithmic curation and filter bubbles

It is important to understand that if filter bubbles or algorithmic curation were the primary reason for polarization, we would expect to see symmetric patterns of attention clustering by populations of audiences and publisher—all of whom are at the same technological frontier. The stark asymmetry between the right and the rest strongly suggests that differences in political culture and, we argue in our book, institutionally-driven media history of right-wing media, particularly talk radio and Fox News, drove the right into a media dynamic we call the propaganda feedback loop. This occurred before major Internet sites developed; Internet sites adapted to that already-operative media dynamic, rather than causing it.

Indeed, when we compare the pre-election coverage and the post-election coverage, attention on the left has shifted more to the center, while attention on the right has remained as right-oriented. Fox News has become more prominent online relative to Breitbart, but at the price of becoming more purely focused on right-oriented content than it was during the election. Fox online has lost hyperlinks from the center-right and center even more than from the center-left and left, and gained links from the right. This pattern is not the simple product of algorithmic filter bubbles. Compared to influence metrics based on social media attention, weblinks are more insulated from platform-imposed algorithms as they reflect the judgment and linking decisions of web authors, rather than attention and sharing patterns of audiences. Nonetheless, the asymmetric polarization appears by this measure too, and it is by this measure that Fox itself has moved to the right since the 2016 election.

7.1.0.0.2 Bots

Over the course of the year we have developed our own versions of several of the most widely-used bot-detection algorithms. We reran all of our analyses after removing accounts that were identified as “bots” by various methods. Although we do in fact identify a good number of accounts that would be considered “bots” by many of these definitions, the overall architecture of communication we observe remains unchanged whether we include these accounts or not. Without stronger evidence that particular major communications dynamics have been swayed by bots, our macro-level observations leave us skeptical as to the importance of bots. Moreover, using micro-scale case studies, we observe bots as background noise rather than as impactful interventions.

7.1.0.0.3 Functional and structural differences

Today’s media ecosystems are of course inseparable from technology, but if technology was at the core of the disinformation problem, we would expect to see as much disinformation on one side of the spectrum as the other. And yet, that’s not the case. The asymmetry we observe in the structure and practices of media across the U.S. political spectrum is evidence that the dynamics and problems in modern day media cannot be explained by technology alone.

Our caution should not be taken as clear evidence that algorithms are unimportant. There is little doubt in our minds that algorithms and machine learning impact media manipulation and disinformation. In large-scale digital media platforms, algorithms serve a curatorial role and act as gatekeepers, and are subject to gaming and manipulation in ways that human editors are not. In our own research, we have seen, for example, that Twitter is littered with disinformation and false accounts, some of which are bots and

others sockpuppets. Moreover, we observe that the spread of disinformation is worse on Facebook than on Twitter, and on Twitter than on the open web. Moreover, we observed that, as Facebook was making its algorithm changes over the year, certain of the worst offenders on both the left and the right lost prominence and attention, although new offenders quickly took their place. In our current work we continue to monitor the differences across platforms and to find measures by which to assess the effectiveness of algorithm changes on Facebook or Twitter on the spread of disinformation and misinformation, and, perhaps most importantly, to assess the impact of these changes on the media ecosystem as a whole.

7.1.0.1 Diagnoses, conclusions, and interventions should be based on systemic observations of impact, rather than individual observations of “bad behavior”

The media manipulation problem and the public attention afforded it have created an environment of urgency. Insights and research are key to mitigating some of this pressure, but the temptation to leap to assumptions of impact from any observable phenomenon is hard to resist. We are naturally drawn to the novel: trolls, clickbait factories, social media algorithms, targeted advertising, psychographic profiling, and Russian interference captivate the imagination and compel question and inquiry. Identifying instances of such interventions is technically challenging, and when we see hard work bear fruit it is tempting to attribute high importance to these observations. Nonetheless, without a baseline against which to assess the impact of one or several of these phenomena, it is impossible to justify assigning them the importance that they currently receive, or to design interventions that properly address the actually important interventions rather than those that are observable and salient.

Putting these novelties into perspective is hampered by our ability to fully and accurately measure media consumption. Audiences reached by misleading and false articles and media sources is measured in the millions. As prolific as this sounds, as described previously this ultimately is a small portion of content and exposure. A second point of uncertainty relates to impact and persuasion—there is scant evidence that false media stories have any impact in changing behavior.

A prime example is Russian efforts to influence election-related discourse. Although information around the number of accounts, posts, and impressions seems to be updated regularly, current numbers draw into question the true significance of their reach. In October 2017, Facebook [revealed](#) that approximately 80,000 pieces of content published by the now infamous Russian-operated Internet Research Agency were introduced to 29 million people between January 2015 and August 2017. Their subsequent likes and shares increased the reach of the posts to 126 million Facebook users. This is indeed a big scary number. But what we don’t know is how much user attention this content commanded among the many billions of stories and posts that comprised the news feeds of U.S. voters, or if it changed any minds or influenced voter behavior. For example, using one of the tools we developed for this project, we can track the appearance of a given string across Facebook public facing pages, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, and the first few posts in 4chan discussions on a timeline down to the minute or second (depending on the platform). Using that utility, we tracked a particular story with strong indications of Russian influence (about John Podesta participating in satanic rituals), and compared all accounts to both the congressionally-released list of Russian Twitter accounts and an additional list of tens of thousands of accounts that are highly likely to be Russian bots or sockpuppets. While we did observe that 5–15% of the accounts were of such provenance at any given minute, the timing and pattern of their participation was unremarkable—a background presence of more-or-less stable existence, rather than a strategic intervention in either timing or in direction, and they therefore did not seem to play an important role in increasing the salience of the story in total or by tweeting it specifically at the major actors who were central in propagating the lie—Wikileaks, Infowars, or, ultimately, Sean Hannity.

It is critical not to confound the observation of a novel phenomenon with its actual impact in the world; newness is no proxy for impact. Indeed the discovery of such phenomena is important, but the messaging around the discovery should not be conflated with evidence that the discovered behavior in fact had impact.

The rapid advancement of technologies that digitally manipulate sound, images, and videos is a source of growing anxiety. It is too soon to predict whether synthetic media will exacerbate media disorder and epistemic crisis, but if fabricated media are shared, consumed, and interpreted in ways similar to the current versions of deceptive media, it will be spread or contained by the same influential social, political, and media entities. The fantastical nature of the claims that were widely believed by significant numbers of voters—nearly half of Trump voters gave some credence to rumors that someone associated with the Clinton campaign was running a pedophilia ring—suggests that social identity, much more than any technical indicia of truth, are the foundation for beliefs and attitudes about political matters.

Our work greatly benefits by consciously focusing on the disinformation forest, rather than on its individual trees. With an eye toward the long-term dynamics between institutions, culture, and technology, we look at algorithms and technology as a relatively new element integrated into the dynamics of broader media systems while keeping grasp of many more traditional vectors and structures. We look across media and across platforms, considering the enduring influence of radio and cable alongside broadcast television and social media platforms. Indeed, a combination of open web media publication and social media network mapping greatly enhances our understanding of the likely impact of bots, sockpuppets, political clickbait, foreign intervention, and microtargeting. Although prolific in absolute terms, the role of these modern vectors of disinformation plays an important but modest role in the overall media ecosystem.

7.1.0.1 It doesn't look like AI is coming to the rescue anytime soon, if ever

There are a number of ways in which AI may help us to address information quality issues, including:

- Automated detection and flagging of false stories; algorithmic tools to point readers to corrections and fact-checking.
- Algorithmic tools to detect and defend against coordinated attacks by propagandists.
- Computational aids to “nudge” of readers and users to expose themselves to media and reporting outside of their echo chambers, thus opening their eyes to a broader range of viewpoints.

Despite the strong advances in the field, there is little indication at present that these tools will be able to serve as independent arbiters of truth, salience, or value. Repeatedly in our work, we have seen that stories built around a kernel of true facts, framed and interpreted in materially misleading ways are more important than stories made of clear falsifiable claims. Moreover, the meaning of stories often emerges from the network of stories and frames within which they are located. Stories and their interpretation—and misinterpretation—draw upon and act through existing social and political structures and narratives. As seen in existing applications, AI is effective at channeling and amplifying sentiments and interests of affinity groups, and helping people in ways that they want to be helped, but no present efforts appear to be able to diagnose the level of subtlety involved in the most important present disinformation campaigns we have been studying.

7.1.0.1 Systemic responses are required to address systemic issues

So what do we do about all of this? There is no silver bullet, but the best thing we can do is to continue to work toward systemic responses to the systemic problems undermining today's media ecosystem and information quality. We must continue to focus attention on rebuilding and strengthening the political and civic institutions that undergird a well functioning democracy. The insights described here draw primarily on research conducted in the United States, but we need ecosystem-based analyses of media systems in more countries to understand how the vulnerabilities, resilience, and dynamics differ across different political and cultural contexts.

Strengthening media accountability mechanisms is vital, and tamping down disinformation and media manipulation is an integral part of the everyday hard work of democracy and governance. But given the perils of placing constraints on political speech, taking a careful and cautious approach to regulation is essential. It is important to be similarly circumspect in what we require of social media companies in addressing disinformation.

Last but far from least, there is still much work to be done in understanding the nature, reach, and impact of disinformation, as well as monitoring and evaluating targeted efforts to inoculate readers and inhibit the spread of disinformation. An area of particular concern is the increasing concentration of research capability and political outreach capability in a few private hands. We must continue efforts to bolster public interest research initiatives and develop and implement structures that allow researchers access to key sources of data with mechanisms in place to ensure robust and ethical research standards.

The development, application, and capabilities of AI-based systems are evolving rapidly, leaving largely unanswered a broad range of important short- and long-term questions related to the social impact, governance, and ethical implementations of these technologies and practices. Over the past year, the [Berkman Klein Center](#) and the [MIT Media Lab](#), as anchor institutions of the [Ethics and Governance of Artificial Intelligence Fund](#), have initiated projects in areas such as social and criminal justice, media and information quality, and global governance and inclusion, in order to provide guidance to decision-makers in the private and public sectors, and to engage in impact-oriented pilot projects to bolster the use of AI for the public good, while also building an institutional knowledge base on the ethics and governance of AI, fostering human capacity, and strengthening interfaces with

industry and policy-makers. Over this initial year, we have learned a lot about the challenges and opportunities for impact. This snapshot provides a brief look at some of those lessons and how they inform our work going forward.

7.1: Understanding Media and Information Quality in an Age of Artificial Intelligence, Automation, Algorithms and Machine Learning is shared under a [CC BY](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by LibreTexts.

Learning Objectives

- Define *information superhighway* as it relates to the Internet.
- Identify ways to identify credible sources online.
- Define *net neutrality*.
- Describe some of the effects of the Internet and social media on traditional media.

By 1994, the promise of the “information superhighway” had become so potent that it was given its own summit on the University of California Los Angeles campus. The country was quickly realizing that the spread of the web could be harnessed for educational purposes; more than just the diversion of computer hobbyists, this new vision of the web would be a constant learning resource that anyone could use.

The American video artist pioneer Nam June Paik takes credit for the term *information superhighway*, which he used during a study for the Rockefeller Foundation in 1974, long before the existence of Usenet. In 2001, he said, “If you create a highway, then people are going to invent cars. That’s dialectics. If you create electronic highways, something has to happen.” “Video and the Information Superhighway: An Artist’s Perspective,” *The Biz Media*, May 3, 2010, <http://blog.thebizmedia.com/video-and-the-information-superhighway/>. Paik’s prediction proved to be startlingly prescient.

Al Gore’s use of the term in the House of Representatives (and later as vice president) had a slightly different meaning and context. To Gore, the promise of the Interstate Highway System during the Eisenhower era was that the government would work to allow communication across natural barriers, and that citizens could then utilize these channels to conduct business and communicate with one another. Gore saw the government as playing an essential role in maintaining the pathways of electronic communication. Allowing business interests to get involved would compromise what he saw as a necessarily neutral purpose; a freeway doesn’t judge or demand tolls—it is a public service—and neither should the Internet. During his 2000 presidential campaign, Gore was wrongly ridiculed for supposedly saying that he “invented the Internet,” but in reality his work in the House of Representatives played a crucial part in developing the infrastructure required for Internet access.



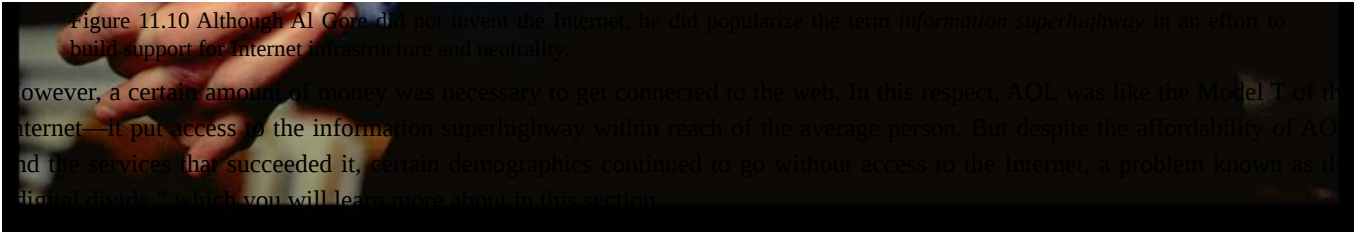


Figure 11.10 Although Al Gore did not invent the Internet, he did popularize the term *information superhighway* in an effort to build support for Internet infrastructure and neutrality.

However, a certain amount of money was necessary to get connected to the web. In this respect, AOL was like the Model T of the Internet—it put access to the information superhighway within reach of the average person. But despite the affordability of AOL and the services that succeeded it, certain demographics continued to go without access to the Internet, a problem known as the *digital divide*, which you will learn more about in this section.

From speed of transportation, to credibility of information (don't trust the stranger at the roadside diner), to security of information (keep the car doors locked), to net neutrality (toll-free roads), to the possibility of piracy, the metaphor of the information superhighway has proved to be remarkably apt. All of these issues have played out in different ways, both positive and negative, and they continue to develop to this day.

7.2.1 Information Access Like Never Before

In December 2002, a survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that 84 percent of Americans believed that they could find information on health care, government, news, or shopping on the Internet. Anick Jesdanun, "High Expectations for the Internet," December 30, 2002, www.crn.com/it-channel/18822182;jsessionid=3Z2ILJNFKM1FZQE1GHPCKH4ATMY32JVN. This belief in a decade-old system of interconnected web pages would in itself be remarkable, but taking into account that 37 percent of respondents were not even connected to the Internet, it becomes even more fantastic. In other words, of the percentage of Americans without Internet connections, 64 percent still believed that it could be a source of information about these crucial topics. In addition, of those who expect to find such information, at least 70 percent of them succeed; news and shopping were the most successful topics, government was the least. This survey shows that most Americans believed that the Internet was indeed an effective source of information. Again, the role of the Internet in education was heralded as a new future, and technology was seen to level the playing field for all students.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the Bush administration's 2004 report, "Toward a New Golden Age in Education: How the Internet, the Law, and Today's Students Are Revolutionizing Expectations." By this time, the term *digital divide* was already widely used and the goal of "bridging" it took everything from putting computers in classrooms to giving personal computers to some high-need students to use at home.

The report stated that an "explosive growth" in sectors such as e-learning and virtual schools allowed each student "individual online instruction." U.S. Department of Education, *Toward a New Golden Age in American Education: How the Internet, the Law and Today's Students Are Revolutionizing Expectations*, National Education Technology Plan, 2004, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/2004/site/theplan/edlite-intro.html. More than just being able to find information online, people expected the Internet to provide virtually unlimited access to educational opportunities. To make this expectation a reality, one of the main investments that the paper called for was increased broadband Internet access. As Nam June Paik predicted, stringing fiber optics around the world would allow for seamless video communication, a development that the Department of Education saw as integral to its vision of educating through technology. The report called for broadband access "24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year," saying that it could "help teachers and students realize the full potential of this technology." U.S. Department of Education, *Toward a New Golden Age in American Education: How the Internet, the Law and Today's Students Are Revolutionizing Expectations*, National Education Technology Plan, 2004, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/2004/site/theplan/edlite-intro.html.

7.2.2 Rural Areas and Access to Information

One of the founding principles of many public library systems is to allow for free and open access to information. Historically, one of the major roadblocks to achieving this goal has been a simple one: location. Those living in rural areas or those with limited access to transportation simply could not get to a library. But with the spread of the Internet, the hope was that a global library would be created—an essential prospect for rural areas.

One of the most remarkable educational success stories in the Department of Education's study is that of the Chugach School District in Alaska. In 1994, this district was the lowest performing in the state: over 50 percent staff turnover, the lowest standardized test scores, and only one student in 26 years graduating from college. U.S. Department of Education, *Toward a New Golden Age in American Education: How the Internet, the Law and Today's Students Are Revolutionizing Expectations*, National

Education Technology Plan, 2004, www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/2004/site/theplan/edlite-intro.html. The school board instituted drastic measures, amounting to a complete overhaul of the system. They abolished grade levels, focusing instead on achievement, and by 2001 had increased Internet usage from 5 percent to 93 percent.

The Department of Education study emphasizes these numbers, and with good reason: The standardized test percentile scores rose from the 1920s to the 1970s in a period of 4 years, in both math and language arts. Yet these advances were not exclusive to low-performing rural students. In Florida, the Florida Virtual School system allowed rural school districts to offer advanced-placement coursework. Students excelling in rural areas could now study topics that were previously limited to districts that could fill (and fund) an entire classroom. Just as the Interstate Highway System commercially connected the most remote rural communities to large cities, the Internet has brought rural areas even further into the global world, especially in regard to the sharing of information and knowledge.

7.2.3 The Cloud: Instant Updates, Instant Access

As technology has improved, it has become possible to provide software to users as a service that resides entirely online, rather than on a person's personal computer. Since people can now be connected to the Internet constantly, they can use online programs to do all of their computing. It is no longer absolutely necessary to have, for example, a program like Microsoft Word to compose documents; this can be done through an online service like Google Docs or Zoho Writer.

"Cloud computing" is the process of outsourcing common computing tasks to a remote server. The actual work is not done by the computer attached to the user's monitor, but by other (maybe many other) computers in the "cloud." As a result, the computer itself does not actually need that much processing power; instead of calculating " $1 + 1 = 2$," the user's computer asks the cloud, "What does $1 + 1$ equal?" and receives the answer. Meanwhile, the system resources that a computer would normally devote to completing these tasks are freed up to be used for other things. An additional advantage of cloud computing is that data can be stored in the cloud and retrieved from any computer, making a user's files more conveniently portable and less vulnerable to hardware failures like a hard drive crash. Of course, it can require quite a bit of bandwidth to send these messages back and forth to a remote server in the cloud, and in the absence of a reliable, always-on Internet connection, the usefulness of these services can be somewhat limited.

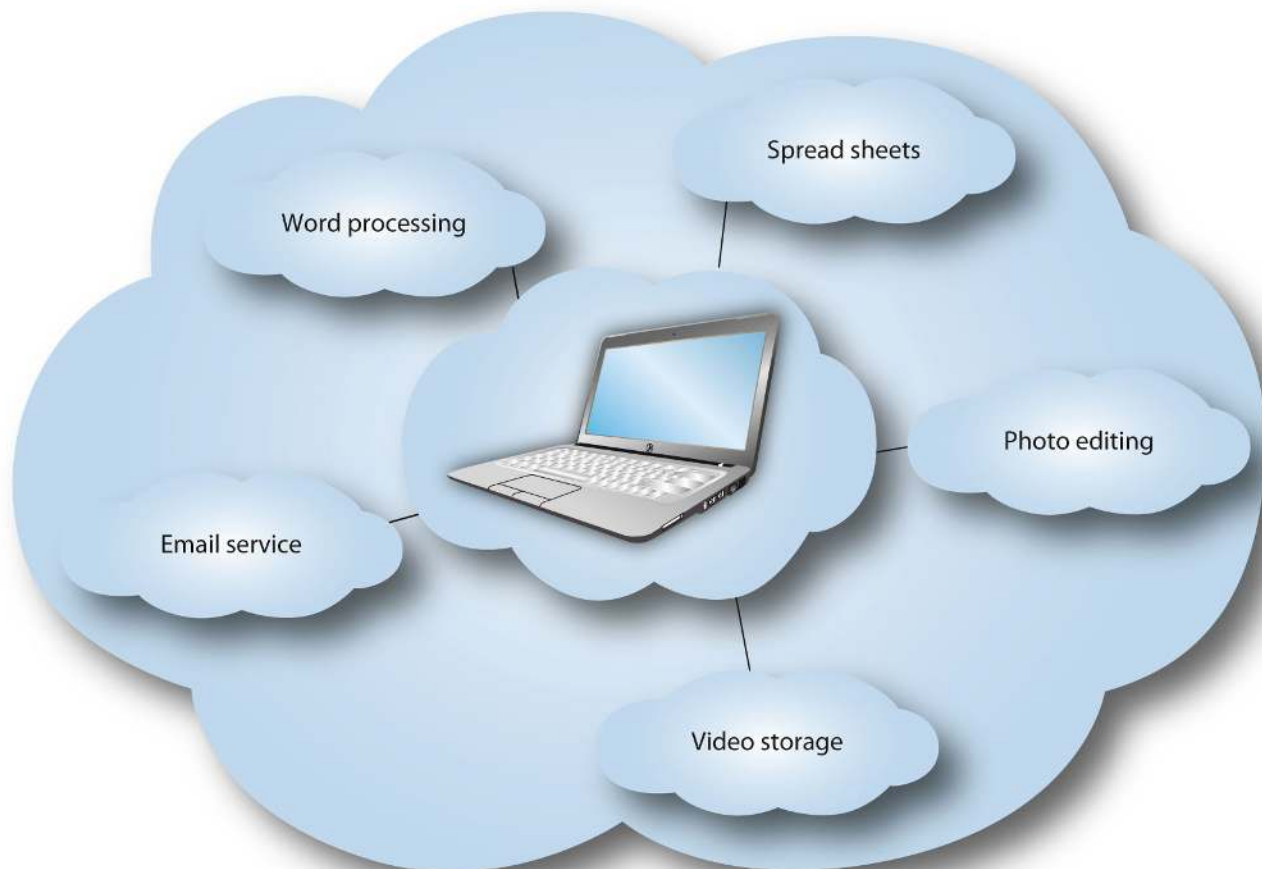


Figure 11.11 Cloud computing allows a computer to contain very little actual information. Many of the programs used by the now-popular “netbooks” are stored online.

The concept of the cloud takes into account all the applications that are hosted on external machines and viewed on a user’s computer. Google Docs, which provides word processors, spreadsheets, and other tools, and Microsoft’s Hotmail, which provides email access, both constitute aspects of the “cloud.” These services are becoming even more popular with the onset of mobile applications and netbooks, which are small laptops with relatively little processing power and storage space that rely on cloud computing. A netbook does not need the processing power required to run Microsoft Word; as long as it has a web browser, it can run the Google Docs word processor and leave (almost) all of the processing to the cloud. Because of this evolution of the Internet, computers can be built less like stand-alone machines and more like interfaces for interacting with the larger system in the cloud.

One result of cloud computing has been the rise in web applications for mobile devices, such as the iPhone, BlackBerry, and devices that use Google’s Android operating system. 3G networks, which are cell phone networks capable of high-speed data transfer, can augment the computing power of phones just by giving the phones the ability to send data somewhere else to be processed. For example, a Google Maps application does not actually calculate the shortest route between two places (taking into account how highways are quicker than side roads, and numerous other computational difficulties) but rather just asks Google to do the calculation and send over the result. 3G networks have made this possible in large part because the speed of data transfer has now surpassed the speed of cell phones’ calculation abilities. As cellular transmission technology continues to improve with the rollout of the next-generation 4G networks (the successors to 3G networks), connectivity speeds will further increase and allow for a focus on ever-more-comprehensive provisions for multimedia.

7.2.4 Credibility Issues: (Dis)information Superhighway?

The Internet has undoubtedly been a boon for researchers and writers everywhere. Online services range from up-to-date news and media to vast archives of past writing and scholarship. However, since the Internet is open to any user, anyone with a few dollars

can set up a credible-sounding website and begin to disseminate false information.

This is not necessarily a problem with the Internet specifically; any traditional medium can—knowingly or unknowingly—publish unreliable or outright false information. But the explosion of available sources on the Internet has caused a bit of a dilemma for information seekers. The difference is that much of the information on the Internet is not the work of professional authors, but of amateurs who have questionable expertise. On the Internet, anyone can self-publish, so the vetting that usually occurs in a traditional medium—for example, by a magazine’s editorial department—rarely happens online.

That said, if an author who is recognizable from elsewhere writes something online, it may point to more reliable information. Elizabeth E. Kirk, “Evaluating Information Found on the Internet,” Sheridan Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, 1996, www.library.jhu.edu/researchhelp/general/evaluating/. In addition, looking for a trusted name on the website could lead to more assurance of reliability. For example, the site krugmanonline.com, the official site of Princeton economist Paul Krugman, does not have any authorial data. Even statements like “Nobel Prize Winner and Op-Ed Columnist for *The New York Times*” do not actually say anything about the author of the website. Much of the content is aggregated from the web as well. However, the bottom-left corner of the page has the mark “© 2009 W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.” (Krugman’s publisher). Therefore, a visitor might decide to pick and choose which information to trust. The author is clearly concerned with selling Krugman’s books, so the glowing reviews may need to be verified elsewhere; on the other hand, the author biography is probably fairly accurate, since the publishing company has direct access to Krugman, and Krugman himself probably looked it over to make sure it was valid. Taking the authorship of a site into account is a necessary step when judging information; more than just hunting down untrue statements, it can give insight into subtle bias that may arise and point to further research that needs to be done.

7.2.5 Just Trust Me: Bias on the Web

One noticeable thing on Paul Krugman’s site is that all of his book reviews are positive. Although these are probably real reviews, they may not be representative of his critical reception at large. Mainstream journalistic sources usually attempt to achieve some sort of balance in their reporting; given reasonable access, they will interview opposing viewpoints and reserve judgment for the editorial page. Corporate sources, like on Krugman’s site, will instead tilt the information toward their product.

Often, the web is viewed as a source of entertainment, even in its informational capacity. Because of this, sites that rely on advertising may choose to publish something more inflammatory that will be linked to and forwarded more for its entertainment value than for its informational qualities.

On the other hand, a website might attempt to present itself as a credible source of information about a particular product or topic, with the end goal of selling something. A website that gives advice on how to protect against bedbugs that includes a direct link to its product may not be the best source of information on the topic. While so much on the web is free, it is worthwhile looking into how websites actually maintain their services. If a website is giving something away for free, the information might be biased, because it must be getting its money from somewhere. The online archive of *Consumer Reports* requires a subscription to access it. Ostensibly, this subscription revenue allows the service to exist as an impartial judge, serving the users rather than the advertisers.

Occasionally, corporations may set up “credible” fronts to disseminate information. Because sources may look reliable, it is always important to investigate further. Global warming is a contentious topic, and websites about the issue often represent the bias of their owners. For example, the Cato Institute publishes anti-global-warming theory columns in many newspapers, including well-respected ones such as the *Washington Times*. Patrick Basham, an adjunct scholar at the Cato Institute, published the article “Live Earth’s Inconvenient Truths” in the *Washington Times* on July 11, 2007. Basham writes, “Using normal scientific standards, there is no proof we are causing the Earth to warm, let alone that such warming will cause an environmental catastrophe.” Patrick Basham, “Live Earth’s Inconvenient Truths,” Cato Institute, July 11, 2007, www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=8497.

However, the website ExxposeExxon.com states that the Cato Institute received \$125,000 from the oil giant ExxonMobil, possibly tainting its data with bias. [ExxposeExxon](http://ExxposeExxon.com), “Global Warming Deniers and ExxonMobil,” 2006, www.exxposeexxon.com/facts/gwdeniers.html. In addition, ExxposeExxon.com is run as a side project of the international environmental nonprofit Greenpeace, which may have its own reasons for producing this particular report. The document available on Greenpeace’s site (a scanned version of Exxon’s printout) states that in 2006, the corporation gave \$20,000 to the Cato Institute. Greenpeace, *ExxonMobil 2006 Contributions and Community Investments*, October 5, 2007, research.greenpeaceusa.org/?a=view&d=4381. (the other \$105,000 was given over the previous decade).

This back-and-forth highlights the difficulty of finding credible information online, especially when money is at stake. In addition, it shows how conflicting sources may go to great lengths—sorting through a company’s corporate financial reports—in order to expose what they see as falsehoods. What is the upside to all of this required fact-checking and cross-examination? Before the Internet, this probably would have required multiple telephone calls and plenty of time waiting on hold. While the Internet has made false information more widely available, it has also made checking that information incredibly easy.

7.2.6 Wikipedia: The Internet’s Precocious Problem Child

Nowhere has this cross-examination and cross-listing of sources been more widespread than with Wikipedia. Information free and available to all? That sounds like a dream come true—a dream that Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales was ready to pursue. Since the site began in 2001, the Wikimedia Foundation (which hosts all of the Wikipedia pages) has become the sixth-most-visited site on the web, barely behind eBay in terms of its unique page views.

Table 11.3 Top 10 Global Web Parent Companies, Home and Work

Rank	Parent	Unique (millions)	Audience	Active Reach %	Time
1	Google	362,006		84.29	2:27:15
2	Microsoft	322,352		75.06	2:53:48
3	Yahoo!	238,035		55.43	1:57:26
4	Facebook	218,861		50.96	6:22:24
5	eBay	163,325		38.03	1:42:46
6	Wikimedia	154,905		36.07	0:15:14
7	AOL LLC	128,147		29.84	2:08:32
8	Amazon	128,071		29.82	0:23:24
9	News Corp.	125,898		29.31	0:53:53
10	InterActiveCorp	122,029		28.41	0:10:52

Source: The Nielsen Company

Organizations had long been trying to develop factual content for the web but Wikipedia went for something else: verifiability. The guidelines for editing Wikipedia state, “What counts is whether readers can verify that material added to Wikipedia has already been published by a reliable source, not whether editors think it is true.” *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Wikipedia:Neutral point of view,” http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Neutral_point_of_view. The benchmark for inclusion on Wikipedia includes outside citations for any content “likely to be challenged” and for “all quotations.”

While this may seem like it’s a step ahead of many other sources on the Internet, there is a catch: Anyone can edit Wikipedia. This has a positive and negative side—though anyone can vandalize the site, anyone can also fix it. In addition, calling a particularly contentious page to attention can result in one of the site’s administrators placing a warning at the top of the page stating that the information is not necessarily verified. Other warnings include notices on articles about living persons, which are given special attention, and articles that may violate Wikipedia’s neutrality policy. This neutrality policy is a way to mitigate the extreme views that may be posted on a page with open access, allowing the community to decide what constitutes a “significant” view that should be represented. *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Wikipedia:Verifiability,” <http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Verifiability>.

As long as users do not take the facts on Wikipedia at face value and make sure to follow up on the relevant sources linked in the articles they read, the site is an extremely useful reference tool that gives users quick access to a wide range of subjects. However, articles on esoteric subjects can be especially prone to vandalism or poorly researched information. Since every reader is a potential editor, a lack of readers can lead to a poorly edited page because errors, whether deliberate or not, go uncorrected. In short, the lack of authorial credit can lead to problems with judging bias and relevance of information, so the same precautions must be taken with

Wikipedia as with any other online source, primarily in checking references. The advantage of Wikipedia is its openness and freedom—if you find a problem, you can either fix it (with your own verifiable sources) or flag it on the message boards. Culturally, there has been a shift from valuing a few reliable sources to valuing a multiplicity of competing sources. However, weighing these sources against one another has become easier than ever before.

7.2.7 Security of Information on the Internet

As the Internet has grown in scope and the amount of personal information online has proliferated, securing this information has become a major issue. The Internet now houses everything from online banking systems to highly personal email messages, and even though security is constantly improving, this information is not invulnerable.

An example of this vulnerability is the Climategate scandal in late 2009. A collection of private email messages were hacked from a server at the University of East Anglia, where much of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change research takes place. These emails show internal debates among the scientists regarding which pieces of data should be released and which are not relevant (or helpful) to their case. Andrew C. Revkin, “Hacked email Is New Fodder for Climate Dispute,” *New York Times*, November 20, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/21/science/earth/21climate.html>. In these emails, the scientists sometimes talk about colleagues—especially those skeptical of climate change—in a derisive way. Of course, these emails were never meant to become public.

This scandal demonstrates how easy it can be to lose control of private information on the Internet. In previous decades, hard copies of these letters would have to be found, and the theft could probably be traced back to a specific culprit. With the Internet, it is much more difficult to tell who is doing the snooping, especially if it is done on a public network. The same protocols that allow for open access and communication also allow for possible exploitation. Like the Interstate Highway System, the Internet is impartial to its users. In other words: If you’re going to ride, lock your doors.

7.2.8 Hacking email: From LOVE-LETTER-FOR-YOU to Google in China

Another explosive scandal involving email account hacking also occurred in late 2009, when Google’s Gmail service was hacked by IP addresses originating in China. Gmail was one of the primary services used by human rights activists due to its location in the United States and its extra encryption. To understand the magnitude of this, it is important to understand the history of email hacking and the importance of physical server location and local laws.

In 2000, a computer virus was unleashed by a student in the Philippines that simply sent a message with the subject line “I Love You.” The email had a file attached, called LOVE-LETTER-FOR-YOU.TXT.vbs. The suffix “.txt” is generally used for text files and was meant, in this case, as a distraction; the file’s real suffix was “.vbs,” which means that the file is a script. When run, this script ran and emailed itself across the user’s entire address book, before sending any available passwords to an email address in the Philippines. One of the key aspects of this case, however, was a matter of simple jurisdiction: the student was not prosecuted, due to the lack of computer crime laws in the Philippines. Kim Zetter, “Nov. 10, 1983: Computer ‘Virus’ Is Born,” *Wired*, November 10, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/thisdayintech/2009/11/1110fred-cohen-first-computer-virus/>.

The encryption that Gmail uses resulted in only two of the accounts being successfully hacked, and hackers were only able to see email subject lines and timestamps—no message content was available. Kim Zetter, “Google to Stop Censoring Search Results in China After Hack Attack,” *Wired*, January 12, 2010, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2010/01/google-censorship-china/>. Since the chaos that ensued after the “I Love You” virus, email users and service providers have become more vigilant in their defensive techniques. However, the increased reliance on email for daily communication makes it an attractive target for hackers. The development of cloud computing will likely lead to entirely new problems with Internet security; just as a highway brings two communities together, it can also cause these communities to share problems.

7.2.9 Can’t Wait: Denial of Service

Although many people increasingly rely on the Internet for communication and access to information, this reliance has come with a hefty price. Most critically, a simple exploit can cause massive roadblocks to Internet traffic, leading to disruptions in commerce, communication, and, as the military continues to rely on the Internet, national security.

Distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks work like cloud computing, but in reverse. Instead of a single computer going out to retrieve data from many different sources, DDoS is a coordinated effort by many different computers to bring down (or overwhelm)

a specific website. Essentially, any web server can only handle a certain amount of information at once. While the largest and most stable web servers can talk to a huge number of computers simultaneously, even these can be overwhelmed.

During a DDoS attack on government servers belonging to both the United States and South Korea in July 2009, many U.S. government sites were rendered unavailable to users in Asia for a short time. Siobhan Gorman and Evan Ramstad, “Cyber Blitz Hits U.S., Korea,” *Wall Street Journal*, July 9, 2009, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124701806176209691.html>. Although this did not have a major effect on U.S. cyber-security, the ease with which these servers could be exploited was troubling. In this case, the DDoS attacks were perpetuated by an email virus known as MyDoom, which essentially turned users’ computers into server-attacking “zombies.” This exploit—coupling an email scam with a larger attack—is difficult to trace, partly because the culprit is likely not one of the original attackers, but rather the victim of a virus used to turn vulnerable computers into an automated hacker army. Since the attack, President Barack Obama has committed to creating a new post for a head of cyber-security in the government.

7.2.10 Net Neutrality

Most Internet users in the United States connect through a commercial Internet service provider (ISP). The major players—Comcast, Verizon, Time Warner Cable, AT&T, and others—are portals to the larger Internet, serving as a way for anyone with a cable line or phone line to receive broadband Internet access through a dedicated data line.

Ideally, ISPs treat all content impartially; any two websites will load at the same speed if they have adequate server capabilities. Service providers are not entirely happy with this arrangement. ISPs have proposed a new service model that would allow corporations to pay for a “higher tier” service. For example, this would allow AOL Time Warner to deliver its Hulu service (which Time Warner co-owns with NBC) faster than all other video services, leading to partnerships between Internet content providers and Internet service providers. The service providers also often foot the bill for expanding high-speed Internet access, and they see this new two-tiered service as a way to cash in on some of that investment (and, presumably, to reinvest the funds received).

The main fear—and the reason the FCC introduced net neutrality rules—is that such a service would hamper the ability of an Internet startup to grow its business. Defenders of net neutrality contend that small businesses (those without the ability to forge partnerships with the service providers) would be forced onto a “second-tier” Internet service, and their content would naturally suffer, decreasing inventiveness and competition among Internet content providers.

7.2.11 Net Neutrality Legislation: The FCC and AT&T

One of the key roadblocks to Internet legislation is the difficulty of describing the Internet and the Internet’s place among communication bills of the past. First of all, it is important to realize that legislation relating to the impartiality of service providers is not unheard-of. Before the 1960s, AT&T was allowed to restrict its customers to using only its own telephones on its networks. In the 1960s, the FCC launched a series of “Computer Inquiries,” stating, in effect, that any customer could use any device on the network, as long as it did not actually harm the network. This led to inventions such as the fax machine, which would not have been possible under AT&T’s previous agreement.

A key point today is that these proto-net neutrality rules protected innovation even when they “threatened to be a substitute for regulated services.” Robert Cannon, “The Legacy of the Federal Communications Commission’s Computer Inquiries,” *Federal Communication Law Journal* 55, no. 2 (2003): 170. This is directly relevant to a controversy involving Apple’s iPhone that culminated in October 2009 when AT&T agreed to allow VoIP (voice over Internet Protocol) on its 3G data networks. VoIP services, like the program Skype, allow a user to place a telephone call from an Internet data line to a traditional telephone line. In the case of the iPhone, AT&T did not actually block the transmission of data—it just had Apple block the app from its App Store. Since AT&T runs the phone service as well as the data lines, and since many users have plans with unlimited data connections, AT&T could see its phone profits cut drastically if all its users suddenly switched to using Skype to place all their telephone calls.

7.2.12 Misleading Metaphors: It’s Not a Big Truck

Senator Ted Stevens, the former head of the committee in charge of regulating the Internet, said on the floor of the Senate that the Internet is “not a big truck ... it’s a series of tubes.” Alex Curtis, “Senator Stevens Speaks on Net Neutrality,” Public Knowledge, June 28, 2006, www.publicknowledge.org/node/497. According to this metaphor, an email can get “stuck in the tubes” for days behind someone else’s material, leading to poorer service for the customer. In reality, service providers sell data-usage plans that

only set a *cap* on the amount of data that someone can send over the Internet (measured in bits per second, where a bit is the smallest measurement of data). If a service is rated at 1.5 million bits per second (megabits per second, or 1.5 Mbps), it may only reach this once in a while—no one can “clog the tubes” without paying massive amounts of money for the service. Theoretically, the company will then invest this service fee in building more robust “tubes.”

Net neutrality is difficult to legislate in part because it can be confusing: It relies on understanding how the Internet works and how communications are regulated. Stevens’s metaphor is misleading because it assumes that Internet capacity is not already regulated in some natural way. To use the superhighway analogy, Stevens is suggesting that the highways are congested, and his solution is to allow companies to dedicate express lanes for high-paying customers (it should be noted that the revenue would go to the service providers, even though the government has chipped in quite a bit for information superhighway construction). The danger of this is that it would be very difficult for a small business or personal site to afford express-lane access. Worse yet, the pro-net neutrality organization Save the Internet says that a lack of legislation would allow companies to “discriminate in favor of their own search engines” and “leave the rest of us on a winding dirt road.” Save the Internet, “FAQs,” 2010, www.savetheinternet.com/faq. For areas that only have access to one Internet service, this would amount to a lack of access to all the available content.

7.2.13 Digital Technology and Electronic Media

Content on the Internet competes with content from other media outlets. Unlimited and cheap digital duplication of content removes the concept of scarcity from the economic model of media; it is no longer necessary to buy a physical CD fabricated by a company in order to play music, and digital words on a screen convey the news just as well as words printed on physical newspaper. Media companies have been forced to reinvent themselves as listeners, readers, and watchers have divided into smaller and smaller subcategories.

Traditional media companies have had to evolve to adapt to the changes wrought by the Internet revolution, but these media are far from obsolete in an online world. For example, social media can provide a very inexpensive and reliable model for maintaining a band’s following. A record company (or the band itself) can start a Facebook page, through which it can notify all its fans about new albums and tour dates—or even just remind fans that it still exists. MySpace has been (and still is, to an extent) one of the main musical outlets on the Internet. This free service comes with a small web-based music player that allows people interested in the band to listen to samples of its music. Coupling free samples with social networking allows anyone to discover a band from anywhere in the world, leading to the possibility of varying and eclectic tastes not bound by geography.

Key Takeaways

- On one hand, the information superhighway has opened up rural areas to global connections and made communication and trade much easier. One downside, however, is that illicit and unwanted information can move just as quickly as positive information—it is up to the recipient to decide.
- The lack of authorial attribution on many online forums can make it difficult to find credible information. However, Wikipedia’s concept of “verifiability,” or citing verified sources, has provided a good check to what can become a matter of mere my-word-against-yours. It is important to gauge possible bias in a source and to judge whether the author has an economic interest in the information.
- Net neutrality is a general category of laws that seek to make it illegal for service providers to discriminate among types of Internet content. One downside of content discrimination is that a service provider could potentially make competitors’ sites load much more slowly than their own.

Exercise 7.2.1

1. Find a website about a single product, musician, or author. Does the site have a stated or strongly implied author?
2. Look for a copyright notice and a date, usually at the bottom of the page. How might that author’s point of view bias the information on the site?
3. How can one determine the author’s credibility?

? End-of-Chapter Assessment

Review Questions

1. Questions for Section 11.1

1. What are two of the original characteristics of the Internet, and how do they continue to affect it?
2. What were some of the technological developments that had a part in the “democratization” of the Internet, or the spread of the Internet to more people?
3. What were the causes and effects of the dot-com boom and crash? How did the dot-com boom and crash influence the Internet in later years, particularly with regards to content providers’ income streams?

2. Questions for Section 11.2

1. What are some of the differences between social networking sites, and how do they reflect a tendency to cater to a specific demographic?
2. How might blogs help the flow of information around the world? How might they damage that information?
3. How has privacy been treated on social networking sites, and how does this affect the culture?
4. How have marketers tried to use social networking to their advantage?

3. Questions for Section 11.3

1. How has globalization on the Internet changed the way culture is distributed?
2. What are the implications of the Internet overtaking print media as a primary source for news, and how might that affect the public discourse?
3. What is the “Internet paradox,” and how have various websites and services tried to combat it? How do Internet users socialize on the Internet?

4. Questions for Section 11.4

1. How does the metaphor of an “information superhighway” relate to both the positive and negative aspects of the Internet?
2. What are some threats to credibility online, and how can users proactively seek only credible sources?
3. What is net neutrality, and how could it change the way we access information on the Internet?
4. How has the Internet affected the music business? How has the Internet affected the music from an artistic perspective?

? Critical Thinking Questions

1. One of the repeated promises of the Internet is that it is truly democratic and that anyone can have a voice. Has this played out in a viable way, or was that a naive assumption that never really came to fruition?
2. How do the concepts of decentralization and protocol play a part in the way the Internet works?
3. How have social networks transformed marketing? What are some of the new ways that marketers can target specific people?
4. How has the Internet changed the way people socialize online? Are there entirely new forms of socializing that did not exist before the Internet?
5. How has the concept of *verifiability* changed the way that “truth” is regarded on the Internet—even in the culture at large? Has the speed and volume with which new information becomes available on the Internet made verifiable information more difficult to come by?

📌 Career Connection

There is a constantly growing market for people who know how to use social media effectively. Often, companies will hire someone specifically to manage their Facebook and Twitter feeds as another aspect of public relations and traditional marketing.

Read the article “5 True Things Social Media Experts Do Online,” written by social media writer Glen Allsopp. You can find it at <http://www.techipedia.com/2010/social-media-expert-skills/>.

Then, explore the site of Jonathan Fields, located at <http://www.jonathanfields.com/blog/>. After exploring for a bit, read the “About” section (the link is at the top). These two sites will help you answer the following questions:

1. How has Jonathan Fields made “everything else irrelevant”? What are some of the indications that he gives in his biography that he is passionate about his industry doing well?
2. Review Jonathan’s Twitter feed on the right column of his site. Who are some of the other people he features, and how might this relate to Glen Allsopp’s advice to “highlight others”?
3. Also look at Jonathan’s “Small Business Marketing” section. What are some of the things he does to help businesses reach customers? How might this be potentially rewarding?
4. Think about the ways that you may use social media in your own life, and how you might be able to use those skills to help a business. Pick an activity that you might (or do) participate in online and write down how you might do the same thing from the perspective of a company. For example, how would you write the “About Me” section of a company’s Facebook profile? How could you start turning this skill into a career?

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By Ivan Sigal, from Global Voices [AdVox](#), March 20, 2017. Licensed under a CC-BY license.

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Protesters fly a flag upside down as a signal of distress outside the offices of The Washington Post in Washington D.C. on Inauguration Day, January 20, 2017. Photo: Ivan Sigal.

In his recent [manifesto](#), Mark Zuckerberg asserts that the response to our dysfunctional and conflict-ridden politics is to build a stronger global community based on ubiquitous interconnection. We know of course that Facebook stands to profit from this utopian vision, and we should be skeptical of the motives underlying Zuck's position. But it's worth taking a second look at the idea of working on underlying economic and political issues in our societies, rather than focusing on the effects of online expression—particularly in the context of the moral panic over “fake news.”

The consternation about fake news from Western journalists, scholars of propaganda, and policymakers has inspired waves of stories and [talk-shops addressing](#) its growth as a threat to our public discourse, our journalism, and our systems of governance. And we see many attempts to understand, fix, or apportion blame. Yet many of the proposed fixes are deeply problematic because they advocate overly broad and vague restrictions on expression. Solutions that would limit suspected “fake” expression or strongly encourage private intermediaries to restrict some kinds of speech and prioritize or “whitelist” others are particularly troubling.

This week, Germany was the latest country to [introduce](#) a plan that would force social media companies to monitor and censor some kinds of online expression. Justice minister Heiko Maas [wants](#) to put regulatory pressure on social media companies, and especially Facebook and Twitter, to police expression, asserting that they have failed to do so voluntarily. Draft legislation proposes to fine social media companies up to €50 million for failure to quickly delete hate speech, fake news, and other types of misleading speech.

In this context, we can look to countries that have created regulatory regimes to control online expression — such as China — not as entirely “other”, but perhaps as cautionary examples. When posing solutions to fix fake news, we should be extremely careful not to build our own self-censorship machines.

7.3.1 “Fake” news and the role of states

Many recent false news stories have come from groups not affiliated with states, but examples from Russia, China, Iran and many other countries should remind us that the biggest threat to our public discourse is false information used by and to the advantage of governments. Governments, after all, have the authority to couple shifting narratives of truth to state mechanisms of control. We ought to be especially attuned to states that restrict the “false” expression of their citizens, while at the same time creating

misleading narratives and stories about themselves. When states attempt to control narratives, it's time to start looking for signs of tyranny.

For the past 20 years, we have seen states or their affiliates use Internet-based false news and disinformation as part of broader agendas to shape public opinion for political ends. Well-researched examples include China's [50 Cent Party](#), Russia's [troll factories](#), and astroturfing [bot engines](#) contracted by the U.S. government, all of which are designed to flood Internet forums and social media with falsities and distractions.

At the same time, some states have [taken steps](#) to regulate, restrict and even criminalize “false” stories produced by citizens and journalists as a punitive method of controlling expression. In Bahrain, [China](#), Egypt, Turkey, Russia, Venezuela, Iran and elsewhere social media users have been arrested and prosecuted for sharing information deemed by governments to be false or misinformed. [New regulations](#) in China forbid the use of “unverified facts distributed via social media platforms” and prohibit websites “from quoting from unnamed or fake news sources and fabricating news based on hearsay, guesswork or imagination.”

A [recent declaration](#) issued by a group of intergovernmental organizations, including UN Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression [David Kaye](#), discusses these regulatory efforts from the perspective of international law and norms. They emphasize that international human rights doctrine explicitly protects expression that may differ from or counter governmental positions, even when it is factually inaccurate. Regulatory and technical approaches to reduce fake news should, they argue, continue to safeguard the diversity and abundance of speech. They write:

the human right to impart information and ideas is not limited to “correct” statements...the right also protects information and ideas that may shock, offend and disturb, and that prohibitions on disinformation may violate international human rights standards, while, at the same time, this does not justify the dissemination of knowingly or recklessly false statements by official or State actors...

7.3.2 What's the problem, exactly?

The real-life consequences of fake news are unclear. A recent [study](#) by the MIT/Harvard research project [Media Cloud](#), (with which Global Voices is [affiliated](#)), led by [Yochai Benkler](#) and [Ethan Zuckerman](#), examines the effects of right-wing information sources in the U.S. It suggests that rather than wringing our hands over “fake news”, we should focus on disinformation networks that are insulated from mainstream public conversations. Benkler and his colleagues challenge the idea that “the internet *as a technology* is what fragments public discourse and polarizes opinions” and instead argue that “human choices and political campaigning, not one company’s algorithm” are the more likely factor to influence the construction and dissemination of disinformation.

Nevertheless, projects seeking to control fake news are running full steam ahead. These efforts have the potential to affect what information is easily available to publics, and if we aren’t careful, could even diminish our rights to expression. Approaches tend to fall into three broad categories:

- Fix online discourse by nudging technologies that control or censor some categories of speech
- Fix the public by making us better at distinguishing fact from fallacy
- Fix journalism, generally with massive cash transfers from the technology sector

Notably, these approaches all focus on mitigating effects rather than confronting the underlying economic or technical incentives in the structure of media, or the broader social, economic and political incentives that motivate speech.

7.3.3 Fix online discourse

In seeking to build systems to manage false news, technology companies will end up creating systems to monitor and police speech. We will quickly find that they need to use ever-more granular, vigilant and therefore continuously updated semantic analysis in order to find and restrict expression.

These proposed solutions to fake news would be in part technological, based on AI and natural language processing. They will automate the search for and flagging of certain terms, word associations, and linguistic formulations. But language is more malleable than algorithm, and we will find that people will invent alternative terms and locutions to express their ends.

The slipperiness of language could cause the hunt for “fake” or hurtful speech to become an end in itself. We have already seen this in the hunt for “toxic” language in a recent project called [Perspective](#), made by Google’s [Jigsaw](#), and other efforts will surely

follow.

Companies are likely to supplement their automated processes with human monitoring — from social media platform users flagging suspect content to contractor armies interpreting those flags and implementing restrictions. Added to this, perhaps, will be ombudspersons, feedback loops, legal processes, and policy controls upon the censors. Those systems are [already in place](#) to deal with terrorism, extreme hate speech, extreme violence, child pornography, and nudity and sexual arousal. They can be further refined and expanded to police other types of expression.

Proposed solutions in this vein mostly fail to acknowledge that the technological incentives that encourage fake news are the same as the forces that currently finance the digital media industry — that is, advertising technology masquerading as editorial content.

The internet theorist Doc Searls calls this “[adtech](#)”, emphasizing that it is a form of direct marketing or spamming. The rise of fake news is driven in part by organizations seeking revenues or political influence by creating sensational and misleading stories packaged for highly polarized audiences. Producers of this content benefit from a system already [designed](#) to [segment](#) and mobilize audiences for commercial ends. That system includes the monitoring of consumer habits, targeted advertising, direct marketing and the creation of editorial products appealing to specific consumer segments. These forces coalesce in a dance of editorial and advertising incentives that leads to further polarization and segmentation.

7.3.4 Fix the public

The next approach — that we fix ourselves — relies on the Victorian idea that our media systems would work if only people behaved in ways expected of them by the builders of systems. [Media literacy](#) campaigns, public education, fact-checking, calling out and shaming tactics, media diets, whitelists of approved media: these solutions require that we blame ourselves for failing to curb our appetites. It is not wrong to suggest that we are susceptible to the allure of the media’s endorphin-injection strategy to hook us on the sensational and trivial, or that education is important for a healthy civics. To focus blame primarily on individuals, however, is victim-blaming of a sort.

7.3.5 Fix journalism

The third approach — devoting more resources to better journalism, is an example of the journalism community jumping on the current moment to reassert their expertise and value. While a more proactive, better-resourced media is definitely vital for the long-term health of our civic life, conversations about journalism need to start with the [trust deficit](#) many journalistic outfits have accumulated over the past decades. That deficit exists precisely because of ever-more sensational and facile reporting, news as entertainment, and the corporate drive to maximise profits over the interests of audiences and readers.

Given that the business model of the liberal, capitalist media is primarily to sell eyeballs to advertisers, they should not be surprised to find those of us being sold becoming wise to the approach. And while efforts to strengthen journalism and public trust in the media are important and much-needed, they will not make fake news go away.

7.3.6 So what are we really talking about?

The technological and the human-based approaches to controlling inaccurate online speech proposed to date for the most part do not address the underlying social, political or communal causes of hateful or false expression. Instead, they seek to restrict behaviors and control effects, and they rely on the good offices of our technology intermediaries for that service. They do not ask us to look more closely at the social and political construction of our communities. They do not examine and propose solutions to address hate, discrimination and bias in our societies, in issues such as income disparity, urban planning, educational opportunity, or, in fact, our structures of governance.

Frustratingly, we have seen these approaches before, in [efforts](#) to reduce online “extremism”, and also with [dubious](#) results. Countering violent extremism (CVE) projects suffer from similar [definitional flaws](#) about the nature of the problem, but that doesn’t stop governments from creating misguided responses. For examples, look to the many ‘counter-narrative’ [projects](#) such as “[Welcome to ISIS Land](#)” funded by the U.S. State Department. These projects, supported by [governments](#), [international organizations](#), and [companies](#), seek an array of technical, communications and policy-based approaches to controlling extremism.

[A video originally embedded here from YouTube is no longer available.]

David Kaye, in an earlier joint declaration on CVE, [notes](#) the “fail[ure] to provide definitions for key terms, such as ‘extremism’ or ‘radicalization’”. “In the absence of a clear definition, these terms can be used to restrict a wide range of lawful expression,” but still [inflict collateral damage](#), with pervasive surveillance and tracking that triggers the self-censor in all of us, resulting in the reduction of civic participation and dialogue.

How do we begin to tackle the larger challenges, those beyond simple technological fixes or self-blame? There are no easy solutions for the economic and social inequities that create divisions, and the technological and economic incentives that underpin our current information ecosystem are deeply entrenched. Yet we need to find a way to start serious conversations about these systemic challenges, rather than tinkering with their effects or simply assigning responsibility to the newest players on the field.

Sir Tim Berners-Lee, the inventor of the internet, has [urged](#) that we reform the systems and business models we have created to fund our online lives. He points, for example, to the use of personal data by companies as the driver for the creation of surveillance societies, which exerts chilling effects on free expression. He suggests seeking alternatives to the concentration of attention and power in the hands of a small number of social media companies that derive profit from showing us content that is “surprising, shocking, or designed to appeal to our biases.” He’s concerned by the use of these same tactics in political advertising, and its effect on our systems of electoral politics.

Confronting our social and economic inequities is even harder. It is the challenge of our time to find the language to conduct honest and frank debate about how we construct our economies and our states, how we apportion benefits, and which values guide us. Building civic communities that are rooted in trust, both online and off, is the ongoing and vital work necessary for public conversations about our collective future.

It is no small irony that the communications systems that we built to support such debate are imperiled, both by those who would explode the social norms of civic discourse for their ideological ends, and through resultant attempts to control extreme or misleading expression. It is easy to find fault with the technologies that facilitate our collective civic life. It is much more difficult to look at our civic life as a whole and determine whether and how it may be failing.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8.1: The Law and Mass Media Messages

8.2: Intellectual Property Issues in the Mass Media

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Learning Objectives

- Identify important laws that relate to different aspects of the media.
- Explain the effects of important laws on media outlets and audiences.

Media law has been a much-debated topic ever since the first U.S. media industry laws appeared in the early 1900s. The contention surrounding media law largely stems from the liberties guaranteed under the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which includes the freedom of the press.

Generally speaking, media law comprises two areas: telecommunications law, which regulates radio and television broadcasts, and print law, which addresses publications such as books, newspapers, and magazines. Despite differences between the two areas, many media laws involve First Amendment protections. This section explores several areas of media law: privacy, libel and slander, copyright and intellectual property, freedom of information, and equal time and coverage.

Privacy, as you have likely noticed, has been a theme in many chapters. The media and privacy intersect in many arenas, including the legal arena. In 1974, Congress passed the Privacy Act, which “protects records that can be retrieved by personal identifiers such as a name, social security number, or other identifying number or symbol.” U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, “The Privacy Act,” <http://www.hhs.gov/foia/privacy/index.html>. This act also regulates how agencies can collect, store, and use information and requires agencies to tell individuals when they are collecting information about them. Designed to ensure that all First Amendment guarantees remain honored, the act requires all public and private agencies to function within its boundaries.

Under the Privacy Act, media personnel must be careful to avoid revealing certain information about an individual without his or her permission, even if that portrayal is factually accurate. Privacy laws, including the Privacy Act, “limit ... your ability to publish private facts about someone and recognize ... an individual’s right to stop you from using his or her name, likeness, and other personal attributes for certain exploitative purposes.” Citizen Media Law Project, “Publishing Personal and Private Information,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/publishing-personal-and-private-information>. Members of the media can avoid the pitfalls of privacy laws by maintaining a professional relationship with the community upon which they report. To avoid liability, journalists and other media professionals are encouraged to report or comment only on “matters of legitimate public interest and only portray people who have a reasonable relationship to [their] topic.” Citizen Media Law Project, “Publishing Personal and Private Information,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/publishing-personal-and-private-information>. In 2005, a legal dispute arose between congressional aides Robert Steinbuch and Jessica Cutler. Steinbuch sued Cutler for publishing information about their intimate relationship; however, the case was dismissed when the court decided that Cutler had only provided facts that were already publically known. Citizen Media Law Project, “Publication of Private Facts,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/publication-private-facts>.

8.1.1 Libel and Slander

Media outlets also must be wary of committing acts of defamation. These occur when false statements that can harm a reputation are printed, broadcast, spoken, or otherwise communicated to others. Two different types of legal protections, libel and slander laws, exist to prevent such defamation from taking place and can extend to individuals, groups, and even companies. Although defamation encompasses both categories, they are separate concepts. Libel refers to written statements or printed visual depictions, while slander refers to verbal statements and gestures. Media Law Resource Center, “Frequently Asked Media Law Questions,” http://www.medialaw.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Public_Resources/Libel_FAQs/Libel_FAQs.htm. State jurisdiction largely covers libel and slander laws, but they are nearly identical throughout the United States.

As with privacy laws, print and broadcast journalists can protect themselves from defamation lawsuits by carrying out responsible reporting. Media personnel are legally protected when communicating a report outweighs any potential damage to a person’s reputation. However, when journalists do not report responsibly, the legal and financial consequences can be devastating. In the 2007 case *Murphy vs. Boston Herald*, the *Boston Herald* newspaper was sued for misquoting Massachusetts Superior Court Judge Ernest Murphy. The court ruled that the false quote was published with a malicious intent and awarded Murphy \$2.1 million in damages. Barbara W. Wall, “News Watch: Boston Newspapers Suffer Setbacks in Libel Cases,” Gannett, 159.54.227.112/go/newswatch/2005/april/nw0401-4.htm. In the more famous case of Linda Tripp in 1998, Tripp was charged with

secretly recording phone conversations between herself and Monica Lewinsky, who had a sexual relationship with President Bill Clinton. Tripp faced a prison sentence of 10 years for slander and illegal documentation; however, the case was dropped in early 2000 due to witness bias. Don Van Natta Jr., “Maryland Is Dropping Wiretap Case against Tripp,” *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/25/us/maryland-is-dropping-wiretap-case-against-tripp.html>. More recently, David and Victoria Beckham sued their former nanny for telling the tabloids that their marriage is in trouble. The nanny’s contract contained an agreement not to talk about the celebrity couple’s private lives. CBS News, “Beckham’s Sue Former Nanny,” February 11, 2009, www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/04/26/entertainment/main691003.shtml

8.1.2 Copyright and Intellectual Property

Copyright laws fall under federal jurisdiction and are, therefore, identical across the country. As you learned in Chapter 4, Congress first established U.S. copyright and patent protections in 1790 and, despite revisions and updates, has maintained some form of copyright law to this day. With coverage of a wide range of materials, copyright law encompasses “almost all creative work that can be written down or otherwise captured in a tangible medium.” Citizen Media Law Project, “Copyright,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/copyright>. This includes literary works; musical works; dramatic works; pictorial, graphic, and sculptural works; motion pictures and other audiovisual works; sound recordings; and even architectural works. Once a work has achieved copyright, the copyright owner must grant permission for that work to be legally reproduced. After a certain number of years, a copyright expires and the work enters the public domain.

Copyright does not, however, protect facts. This is of particular importance for news media. Despite the length of time it takes to uncover facts, no individual or company can own them. Anyone may repeat facts as long as that person does not copy the written story or broadcast in which those facts were communicated.

Intellectual property law protects “products of the mind,” including copyrights, patents, open licenses, trademarks, trade secrets, URLs, domain names, and even components of television programs (as David Letterman found out when he moved from NBC to CBS, and was forced to leave certain aspects of his television show behind). Intellectual property law generally follows the same guidelines as copyright law, and the associated legislation seeks “to encourage innovation and creativity, with an ultimate aim of promoting a general benefit to society.” Citizen Media Law Project, “Intellectual Property,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/intellectual-property>. The role of copyright and intellectual property in the mass media will be covered in greater detail later in this chapter.

8.1.3 Freedom of Information Act

President Lyndon B. Johnson first signed the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) into law in 1966. By requiring full or partial disclosure of U.S. government information and documents, the act “helps the public keep track of its government’s actions, from the campaign expenditures of city commission candidates to federal agencies’ management of billions of dollars in tax revenues.” Citizen Media Law Project, “Access to Government Records,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/access-government-records>. Because it allows everyone access to federal documents and information that otherwise would go unreleased, FOIA is particularly important for those working in the news media.

Although the act covers a large range of agencies, some offices are exempt from FOIA. The act provides access to the public records of the executive branch of the U.S. government but does not include documents from the current president, Congress, or the judicial branch. Citizen Media Law Project, “Access to Records from the Federal Government,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/access-records-from-federal-government>. Because FOIA pertains to individuals and information in high levels of government, the process of accessing information can be complicated. Those who are interested must become skilled at navigating the complex set of procedures to offer citizens accurate information. Although FOIA allows any person for any reason access to the records, journalists who work for mainstream media organizations often receive perks such as the waiving of fees and expedited processing. Citizen Media Law Project, “Who Can Request Records Under FOIA,” <http://www.citmedialaw.org/legal-guide/who-can-request-records-under-foia>.

8.1.4 The Equal Time Rule

Falling under broadcast regulations, the Communication Act’s Section 315—also known as the Equal Time Rule—requires radio and television stations to give equal opportunity for airtime to all candidates. Essentially, Section 315 ensures that television and

radio stations cannot favor any one political candidate over another.

Passed by Congress in 1927, the equal opportunity requirement was the first major federal broadcasting law. Legislators feared that broadcasters and stations would be able to manipulate elections by giving one candidate ample air time. Although candidates cannot receive free airtime unless their opponents do as well, the law doesn't take into consideration campaign funding. Well-funded candidates who can afford to pay for airtime still have an advantage over their poorly funded peers. Controversies over campaign financing are directly tied to the high cost of political campaign advertising, especially over television.

News programs, interviews, and documentaries are exempt from the requirements of Section 315. This allows media outlets to report on the activities of a candidate without also having to cover the activities of his or her opponent. Presidential debates fall under this exemption as well and are not required to include third-party candidates.

Section 315 also prohibits media from censoring what a candidate says or presents on air. Recently there has been controversy over campaign ads picturing aborted fetuses. Citing Section 315, the FCC allowed these television ads to continue to run. Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Equal Time Rule: U.S. Broadcasting Regulatory Rule," www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=equaltimeru.

8.1.5 The Fairness Doctrine

As discussed in Chapter 7, the Fairness Doctrine was enacted in 1949, when applications for radio broadcast licenses outpaced the number of available frequencies. At the time, concerns that broadcasters might use their stations to promote a particular perspective encouraged the creation of the radio-specific version of Section 315. The FCC thus instituted the Fairness Doctrine to "ensure that all coverage of controversial issues by a broadcast station be balanced and fair." Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Fairness Doctrine," www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=fairnessdoct.

The FCC took the view ... that station licensees were "public trustees," and as such had an obligation to afford reasonable opportunity for discussion of contrasting points of view on controversial issues. The commission later held that stations were also obligated to actively seek out issues of importance to their community and air programming that addressed those issues. Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Fairness Doctrine," www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=fairnessdoct.

The Fairness Doctrine was considered controversial among journalists who felt that it infringed on the rights of free speech and freedom of press granted in the First Amendment. The doctrine was dissolved during the 1980s with the Reagan administration's deregulatory efforts. We can see these effects today with the popularity of political talk radio. Stations do not have to assure that all sides of an issue are discussed.

8.1.6 The Digital Millennium Copyright Act

In 1998, Congress passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) to bring order to the then-largely-unregulated online arena. As discussed in Chapter 13, the DMCA prohibits individuals from either circumventing access-control measures or trafficking devices that may help others circumvent copyright measures. Under this act, it is illegal to use code-cracking devices to illegally copy software, and websites are required to take down material that infringes on copyrights. (You've experienced this regulation yourself if you've ever visited YouTube or Google Video and found that a video has been removed due to copyright claims.)

The DMCA does allow webcasting (the broadcasting of media over the Internet) as long as webcasters pay licensing fees to the companies that own the material. This allows sites such as Hulu to legally stream movies and television shows to viewers. The DMCA also protects institutes of higher education, including distance-learning programs, from certain copyright liabilities. Online Institute for Cyberspace Law and Policy, "The Digital Millennium Copyright Act," UCLA, www.gseis.ucla.edu/iclp/dmca1.htm.

One of the most controversial aspects of the DMCA is that, while it requires websites to remove copyrighted material, it does not require websites to monitor their content. A 3-year-long court battle between media giant Viacom and the Google-owned website YouTube was recently waged over this factor. Viacom argued that YouTube infringed on its rights by hosting copyrighted videos. Google responded that while YouTube may include copyrighted material, it is not required to scan every user-uploaded video for copyright infringement. When a claim is brought against a YouTube video, the video is removed—beyond that, the website is not responsible for content. The judge ruled in favor of Google, stating that it was indeed protected under the DMCA. While many saw this as a victory for Internet freedom, others warned that it would have future consequences for the protection of copyright

holders. Steve Rosenbaum, "Viacom vs. YouTube: What Was Won. What Was Lost," *Huffington Post*, July 9, 2010, www.huffingtonpost.com/steve-rosenbaum/viacom-vs-YouTube-what-wa_b_641489.html.

Key Takeaways

- The Privacy Act works to guarantee privacy to individuals and controls how personal information is used. Defamation in the written form (libel) or the spoken form (slander) is illegal in the United States.
- Questions for Section 315 (Equal Time Rule) ensures that broadcast media cannot favor any one candidate over another by granting one more time than another. The Fairness Doctrine ensured that radio stations offered equal time to opposing viewpoints.
- The Freedom of Information Act grants the public, including the news media, access to many government documents. The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, established in 1998, extended existing copyright laws to encompass and protect information online.

? Exercise 8.1.1

Visit the website of a major media outlet and examine the coverage of a recent local, state, or national election. Compare the coverage of different candidates. Then write answers to the short-response questions below. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Identify and describe important laws that relate to different aspects of the media.
2. Explain the effects of the Privacy Act, Section 315, the Fairness Doctrine, and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act on media outlets and audiences.
3. Using information gathered from the media website, do you think there was equal coverage of candidates during the recent election? Why or why not? How do you think this balance would have differed if Section 315 were not in existence?

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Learning Objectives

- Determine the importance of ethical and legal compliance in online interactions.
- Identify the role of copyright protection in cyberspace.
- Describe the RIAA's antipiracy efforts.
- Explain why complete privacy does not exist online.

Since its inception, the Internet has posed problems of who owns the content. Over the years, the government has struggled to find ways to introduce copyright protections into the online environment because, unlike other forms of media, the Internet enables users to make an unlimited number of copies of material and to transmit that information around the world. Bill Rosenblatt, "The Digital Object Identifier: Solving the Dilemma of Copyright Protection Online," *Journal of Electronic Publishing* 3, no. 2 (1997), quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=jep;view=text;rgn=main;idno=3336451.0003.204. In this section, we explore the unique challenges presented in dealing with online copyright and intellectual property and the U.S. government's role in regulating those fields.

8.2.1 Online Creativity and Intellectual Property Rights

Congress passed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in 1998 to establish a protocol for online copyright matters. Yet the nature of the Internet causes very different copyright and intellectual property issues than older forms of media do. Because of the ease of sharing information online, for example, the DMCA has not worked as Congress expected. Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Digital Millennium Copyright Act," www.eff.org/issues/dmca. Copying and sharing materials online is relatively simple and, as such, piracy and rights infringement run rampant. In fact, many have argued that despite the DMCA's attempt to stop piracy, in practice, it has done nothing. Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Digital Millennium Copyright Act," www.eff.org/issues/dmca. Additionally, because information is disseminated so rapidly online, piracy opponents struggle with determining the rightful owner of a particular copyright.

The DMCA and its role in Internet policing have frustrated many online users and watchdog groups. The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) claims that "the DMCA has become a serious threat that jeopardizes fair use, impedes competition and innovation, chills free expression and scientific research, and interferes with computer intrusion laws." Electronic Frontier Foundation, "Digital Millennium Copyright Act," www.eff.org/issues/dmca. In 2004, comic book company Marvel Entertainment sued game publishers NCsoft and Cryptic for copyright infringement in their online game *City of Heroes*. Marvel argued that players could use the character customization system in *City of Heroes* to make characters look almost identical to Marvel characters. David Jenkins, "Marvel Sues *City Of Heroes* Creators," *Gamasutra*, November 12, 2004, www.gamasutra.com/php-bin/news_index.php?story=4548. Situations like this led groups such as the EFF to publicly call for DMCA reform. Such disputes serve as reminders of the challenges inherent in issuing copyrights and intellectual property rights for the online industry.

8.2.2 Copyright Protection in Cyberspace

Certainly, the DMCA brought about major transformations by establishing copyright protection guidelines for the digital arena. However, in 1996—prior to the passage of the DMCA—the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) established two treaties designed to "update and supplement the major existing WIPO treaties on copyright and related rights, primarily in order to respond to developments in technology and in the marketplace." World Intellectual Property Organization, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.wipo.int/copyright/en/faq/faqs.htm#P7_220. The first of these, the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT), was created to protect authors of literary and artistic works, including computer programs, original databases, and fine art. World Intellectual Property Organization, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.wipo.int/copyright/en/faq/faqs.htm#P7_220. The second, the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT), deals with "related rights," or rights connected to copyright. This law was created to protect the rights of performers and producers of sound recordings. World Intellectual Property Organization, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.wipo.int/copyright/en/faq/faqs.htm#P7_220. These treaties both ensure basic rights, such as compensation and acknowledgement for those who create works, and extend further protections. World Intellectual Property Organization, "Frequently Asked Questions," www.wipo.int/copyright/en/faq/faqs.htm#P7_220.

Supported by the WIPO and the DMCA, new forms of communication now enjoy copyright protections. Copyright laws cover blogs and website content, provided that these sites contain original writing. U.S. Copyright Office, “What Does Copyright Protect?” www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-protect.html#what_protect. Despite these developments, however, the Internet still poses challenges for copyrighted material. Because the web changes so quickly, maintaining copyright protection with the Copyright Office can be difficult. Presently, a work must be fixed and in a tangible form to be protected under copyright. Different, altered versions of the same work might not be covered under an original filed copyright claim. As such, authors publishing online must be careful to ensure that their work is protected.

8.2.3 The RIAA versus Piracy

Widespread piracy problems arose during the late 1990s with the popularization of technology allowing peer-to-peer (P2P) music sharing. Suddenly, software such as Napster, Scour, Aimster, AudioGalaxy, Morpheus, Grokster, Kazaa, iMesh, and LimeWire popped up on computers everywhere, allowing access to free music around the world—and fueling online piracy. However, in 2003, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) put the laws established by the DMCA into practice and began a campaign to stop music piracy. In response to the growing number of users, the organization announced that it had been gathering evidence against users sharing music on P2P networks. Rather than go after the software engineers, “the RIAA investigators targeted ‘uploaders’—individuals who were allowing others to copy music files from their ‘shared’ folders.” U.S. Copyright Office, “What Does Copyright Protect?” http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-protect.html#what_protect.

This data collection led to the RIAA filing more than 250 lawsuits against individuals in what has been called “an unprecedented legal campaign against its own customers.” Electronic Frontier Foundation, “RIAA v. The People,” <http://www.eff.org/riaa-v-people>. Among the first of these lawsuits was one against a 12-year-old girl who had to pay \$2,000 and publicly apologize to settle her case. Since then, the recording industry has filed, settled, or threatened legal actions against over 28,000 individuals. Electronic Frontier Foundation, “RIAA v. The People,” <http://www.eff.org/riaa-v-people>. Many college students have been targeted. Recently, the popular torrent site The Pirate Bay found itself under attack for allowing users to search for pirated copies of material. This case mirrors the case of Viacom versus YouTube, because the prosecution argued that The Pirate Bay was responsible for the material its users posted and downloaded. These lawsuits raise the question of whether websites are responsible for the actions of their users, an issue that looks to be central to future Internet legislation. Mike Masnick, “Pirate Bay Loses a Lawsuit; Entertainment Industry Loses an Opportunity,” *Techdirt*, April 17, 2009, <http://www.techdirt.com/articles/20090417/0129274535.shtml>.

8.2.4 The Law and Online Interactions

The Internet is a relatively new form of media, but it is not exempt from media laws. Terms of service agreements, as well as legislation such as the 1986 Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, regulate Internet use. As you will see in the following case studies, when it comes to criminal use, the Internet is not as anonymous as it seems.

8.2.5 TOS Agreements

All software and most Internet sites have a terms of service agreement to which its users must comply. Terms of service (TOS) are legally binding rules that an individual must adhere to in order to use a particular piece of software or service. iTunes, for instance, makes users agree to use their downloadable material for noncommercial use only and states that Apple is not responsible for lost or corrupted files. Anyone who has installed a new piece of software or logged on to social networking sites has agreed to a TOS. Entrance into these sites or use of a program typically requires a user to read through legal guidelines and then click a box agreeing to abide by the stated rules. You likely have done so numerous times.

Deterred by the length and legal jargon of the standard TOS, however, many people skip to the end and simply accept the terms without reading them carefully. iTunes, for instance, has a clause that states the following:

You may not use or otherwise export or re-export the Licensed Application [iTunes] except as authorized by United States law ... the Licensed Application may not be exported or re-exported ... into any U.S.-embargoed countries ... You also agree that you will not use these products for any purposes prohibited by United States law, including, without limitation, the development, design, manufacture, or production of nuclear, missile, or chemical or biological weapons. Apple, “Terms and Conditions,” <http://www.apple.com/legal/itunes/us/terms.html>.

While not all Terms of Service are as extensive, an individual's breach of any TOS may result in suspension, restriction, or cancellation of account privileges, depending on the severity of the offense. As individuals become increasingly reliant on Internet services such as email, calendars, and social networks, the potential for disruption is enormous.

8.2.6 The Case of Megan Meier

In 2008, a compelling court case arose regarding TOS violation. Lori Drew, a 49-year-old woman, was accused of using a fake MySpace account to convince 13-year-old Megan Meier to commit suicide. How did it come about? After Drew's daughter had a confrontation with Meier, Drew created an account pretending to be a teenage boy. At first she used the persona to flirt with Meier and uncover information about the teenager's social life and relationship to her daughter. Later, when Drew decided she had enough information, she broke off her friendship, telling Meier that the world would be better off without her. Later that day, a distraught Megan Meier hanged herself. Jennifer Steinhauer, "Verdict in MySpace Suicide Case," *New York Times*, November 26, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/27/us/27myspace.html>. After Lori Drew's identity was revealed, Meier's shocked parents filed charges against her. Despite the tragic events, whether Drew had actually committed a crime remained questionable. Eventually, prosecutors decided the following:

Since there were no laws that applied in Missouri, the state where this tragedy occurred, [Drew] will face trial in California (the home of MySpace) where she will be charged with—of all things—TOS violations. Creating a false identity goes against MySpace's terms of service and ... as a result she will be facing 1 count of conspiracy and 3 counts of accessing a computer without authorization. Steve Spalding, "Lori Drew Facing Trial for TOS Violation," *How to Split an Atom*, November 21, 2008, howtosplitanatom.com/the-news/lori-drew-facing-trial-for-tos-violation/.

The case is complicated and the charge unprecedented. As one author writes, "This raises the questions as to how much weight do online 'contracts' hold." Steve Spalding, "Lori Drew Facing Trial for TOS Violation," *How to Split an Atom*, November 21, 2008, howtosplitanatom.com/the-news/lori-drew-facing-trial-for-tos-violation/.

Prosecutors charged Drew under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act (CFAA), although that law is designed primarily to reduce hacking into computer systems. In August 2009, a jury found Drew guilty of "misdemeanor counts of unauthorized access," but commented that "the CFAA was not devised as a vehicle for criminalizing simple contractual violations on the Internet." Ryan Paul, "Judge: TOS Violations Not a Crime in Teen Suicide Case," *Ars Technica* (blog), August 31, 2009, <http://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/news/2009/08/judge-says-tos-violations-arent-a-crime-acquits-lori-drew.ars>. Although many believe that prosecutors pushed the charge too far, the Drew case brought TOS agreements to the attention of the public, shedding light on the complicated laws associated with Internet use.

8.2.7 Crimes on the Internet

Although cases such as Drew's have brought about unexpected challenges, other online cases have had less ambiguous results. One newly clarified aspect of online law involves the use of the Internet to commit a crime. Regardless of the supposed anonymity of online use, law enforcement agencies and courts can requisition Internet Protocol (IP) addresses of suspected lawbreakers and trace their computers to discover their identities. This practice has brought many individuals to trial for criminal offenses committed over the Internet.

8.2.8 Online Hate Crimes and Anonymity

In 1998, a federal court found a 21-year-old Los Angeles man, Richard Machado, guilty of sending racist death threats to 59 Asian students. This case set a precedent because Machado was the first person to be convicted of an online hate crime for sending the message via email. Machado had used a campus computer to send an email to a group of mostly Asian students at University of California, Irvine, saying, "I personally will make it my life career to find and kill every one of [you]." Machado, a former UC Irvine student, signed the email "Asian Hater." Prosecutors charged Machado with sending the threat based on the recipients' race or ethnicity and interfering with their right to attend a public university. Courtney Macavinta, "Conviction in Online Threat Case," *CNET*, February 11, 1998, http://news.cnet.com/Conviction-in-online-threat-case/2100-1023_3-208044.html.

The case signaled a new legal development because it was the first trial regarding hate crimes online. Prosecutor Michael Gennaco said of Machado's sentencing, "The jury has spoken that a line needs to be drawn in cyberspace. If you cross that line, you'll be subjected to the same criminal penalties you would be as if you use a telephone or post mail to do these kinds of acts." Courtney

Macavinta, “Conviction in Online Threat Case,” *CNET*, February 11, 1998, http://news.cnet.com/Conviction-in-online-threat-case/2100-1023_3-208044.html. Internet law specialists agree with Gennaco that the Internet is not and should not be treated differently from other communication methods; something posted online carries the same weight as a phone conversation or face-to-face interaction. This means that online anonymity is, in fact, not anonymous.

Despite the precedent of Machado’s case, many people still mistakenly believe that the Internet will protect them from prosecution. Such was the case of Walter Edward Bagdasarian, who discovered that the government can trace supposedly anonymous posts using IP addresses. U.S. Secret Service agents arrested Bagdasarian, a Southern California man, in 2009 for “posting a racist note to a Yahoo message board in October [2008] expressing displeasure over Barack Obama’s candidacy, and predicting ‘he will have a 50 cal in the head soon.’” Kevin Poulsen, “Online Threat to Kill Obama Leads to Arrest,” *Wired*, January 9, 2009, <http://www.wired.com/threatlevel/2009/01/threat/>. The case exemplifies both the ease with which authorities can and do trace criminal behavior online and their propensity to take such cases seriously.

What does the future hold for Internet legislation? Many say that it will closely mirror that of other media outlets. Already there have been cases regarding Internet monopolies, defamation of users, and copyright infringement on message boards and personal websites. Netlitigation, “Internet Law: News, Suits, and Discussion,” <http://www.netlitigation.com/netlitigation/>. Others argue that Internet regulation should take into account the differences between the use of the Internet and the use of other media; for example, an Arizona radio station that violates broadcasting laws is tried in Arizona, but where should an Internet podcaster be charged? If a user posts information on a community forum, is it protected under copyright? Does email spam fall under the same regulations as telemarketing? What privacy rights should Internet users have? As the Internet grows and more issues are taken to court, authorities must come to terms with media issues in a constantly changing digital landscape.

Key Takeaways

- The DMCA and the WIPO provide basic legal guidelines for copyright and intellectual property protections online. Nevertheless, regulating and enforcing such statutes remains a complicated, difficult process due to the rapid change and shared authorship inherent to online content.
- In 2003, the RIAA began a campaign against illegal peer-to-peer sharing of music. Its actions resulted in hundreds of lawsuits and greater awareness of issues pertaining to digital copyrights.
- Law enforcement agencies and courts can requisition IP addresses and trace computers to discover the identity of online users suspected of committing crimes. Seemingly anonymous Internet activities may be subject to severe legal consequences.

Exercise 8.2.1

Thoroughly read a terms of service agreement from a major website you use frequently, such as a social networking site. How do the terms fit with your expectations? Is there anything that you find surprising? Is there anything that causes any concerns? With this in mind, answer the following short-answer questions. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Describe the importance of ethical and legal compliance in online interactions. What would happen if you violated the terms of service that you read?
2. Describe the RIAA’s antipiracy efforts.
3. Explain why complete privacy does not exist online.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9.1: News

9.2: Different Styles and Models of Journalism

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Learning Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What is news?
2. What is objectivity?
3. How do journalists acquire the news?
4. How is the news presented?
5. How do people in public life try to influence their depictions by and in the media?
6. What are three common ways journalists cover people in public life?

Information about or relevant to politics, government, and public policies commonly appears in the mass media in the form of news. News is a selective account of what happens in the world. Common subjects are violence (wars), crime (school shootings), natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes), and scandals (sexual, financial). The statements and actions of powerful or prominent people are news. So are human interest stories, such as the rescue of Private Jessica Lynch.

News is timely, a breaking event, like an assassination attempt on a president. Or newly revealed information, such as a presidential candidate's drunk-driving conviction, even if it happened years ago. Slow-moving processes that may be of vital importance (e.g., the spread of AIDS or global warming) take time to become news, often requiring a "peg"—the release of an alarmist study, a congressional hearing, or presidential speech—on which to hang the story.

9.1.1 Journalists

News is reported by journalists. They work under time pressure with tight deadlines to come up with stories around the clock. This job has become more difficult in recent years as budget cuts have led news organizations to demand more stories for more outlets from fewer reporters.

A majority of journalists are white, middle class, middle-aged, and male. Women now compose about one-third of the press corps and racial minorities around one-tenth. In a survey, 36 percent identified themselves as Democrats, 33 percent as Independents, and 18 percent as Republicans.^[1] Reporters tend to be pro-choice, for gay rights, and in favor of protecting the environment. But they try to refrain from showing their preferences in their stories.

Any influence of reporters' characteristics and opinions on their stories is limited by the norms of objectivity they learn in journalism school or on the job. Specified in the profession's code of ethics, these include reporting accurate information, not deliberately distorting or plagiarizing, and separating reporting from advocacy (Society of Professional Journalists, 1996). Journalists are expected to report different sides of an issue, be impartial and fair, and exclude their personal opinions (Mindich, 1998).

If they are found out, journalists who deliberately and blatantly violate the profession's ethics are punished. *New York Times* reporter Jayson Blair was dismissed after it was discovered that he had fabricated or plagiarized around forty of the six hundred articles he had written for the paper; editors resigned in the wake of the discoveries. Jack Kelly was the star foreign correspondent for *USA Today* and had worked for the paper for over twenty years when he resigned in January 2004, accused of plagiarism and of inventing parts or all of some of his stories.

Comparing Content

Depictions of Journalists

- Many of our impressions of journalists, their behavior, importance, and trustworthiness come from the media.^[2] Media depictions repeat two types best captured in the classic film *His Girl Friday*: reporter Hildy Johnson (Rosalind Russell) and her editor Walter Burns (Cary Grant).
- The first type exemplified by Hildy is the journalist as intrepid seeker after truth and crusader for justice. The most famous real-life equivalents are Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the *Washington Post* reporters who helped uncover the Watergate scandal and wrote a book about it, *All the President's Men*, which was turned into a popular Hollywood movie.

Even some caustic satires of the news business contain versions of the journalist as noble loner. In *Network*, Peter Finch plays a television news anchor who begins to go insane on camera, shouting “I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore.” In the movie, his pain and anguish are exploited by amoral network executives. In real life, his battle cry became the theme of citizens’ tax revolts in the late seventies and could be heard at Tea Party rallies thirty years later.

- The second type of journalist, characterized by Walter Burns, is more common in the entertainment media. At their worst, as in Billy Wilder’s classic *Ace in the Hole*, such reporters cynically and callously exploit the disasters of the human condition. But even less bitter films show reporters as inevitably led astray from their devotion to the truth to the point that they destroy lives and reputations in their reckless search for an exclusive story ahead of other reporters (a **scoop**) that is dramatic and shocking. In *Absence of Malice*, Sally Field plays a reporter who ends up besmirching a good man’s (Paul Newman) reputation. In *Broadcast News*, William Hurt and Albert Brooks compete to become a news anchor. Hurt—good-looking, smooth, unscrupulous, and none too bright—wins out over the dumber, knowledgeable, and dedicated Brooks.
- A contemporary example of the second type is Rita Skeeter. Introduced by J. K. Rowling in her vastly popular Harry Potter series, Skeeter writes for the *Daily Prophet*, *Witch Weekly*, and other publications. She is untrustworthy, unscrupulous, vindictive, and vile. She justifies her behavior with the motto “Our readers have a right to the truth.” But her news stories are error-strewn and full of lies. They destroy friendships, inflict pain and suffering, and deprive decent people of their jobs. Rita Skeeter gets scoops by turning herself into a bug. The moral is that such journalists are nasty bugs (Rowling, 2000).

9.1.2 Acquiring the News

Journalists follow standard procedures to obtain the news. They go to the scene, especially of wars and disasters. They talk to people who have participated in, witnessed, or claim to know what happened. They dig into records. Easing their job, many events, such as press conferences, trials, and elections, are scheduled ahead of time.

9.1.3 Beats

News organizations guarantee stories by assigning reporters to cover distinct beats such as the White House or specific subjects such as environmental policy. Institutions and subjects not on reporters’ beats (off the beaten track, so to speak) generate few stories unless they do something to become newsworthy. Sometimes events thrust them into prominence, as when the banking crisis of 2008 raised questions about the regulatory effectiveness of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

9.1.4 Sources

Journalists interact with and rely extensively on sources—generally people in government and politics, especially those in high positions of authority—to provide them with scoops and quotations. Other sources are whistle-blowers, who reveal information they have about dubious activities, outrages, or scandals. Depending on their motives, sources either provide information openly and unreservedly or leak it subject to various conditions such as anonymity (Hess, 1984).

Often the reporter-source relationship is symbiotic: they need each other. Reporters need sources for news. Sources need reporters to get their views and information into the news, to obtain favorable coverage.

Sometimes the relationship is adversarial, with reporters pressing a reluctant source for information. Sources must often respond to reporters’ ideas of what is news. Information from one beat may inspire a news story that another beat wants to keep quiet. Refusal to reveal information may result in negative coverage and in sources becoming targets in reporters’ and columnists’ stories.

9.1.5 Government Reports

Legislative committees, regulatory agencies, and governmental departments and commissions conduct investigations, hold hearings, and issue reports and press releases. Journalists sometimes draw on these sources for their stories. Typical is a *New York Times*’s front page story headlined “Terror Suspects Buying Firearms, Report Finds” (in the United States), based on an investigation by the Government Accountability Office (Lichtblau, 2005).

9.1.6 Investigative Reporting

Some journalists specialize in investigative reporting, pursuing information that may involve legal or ethical wrongdoing and that is likely to be concealed (Ettema & Glasser, 1998). This reporting requires detailed and thorough digging into a story. It is often time consuming and expensive. The *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *New Yorker*, *Rolling Stone*, and *Mother Jones* are some

of the publications that still engage in it, as do the nonprofit [Center for Public Integrity](#), which in November 2010 absorbed the Huffington Post's "Investigative Fund," [Pro-Publica](#), and the Center for Investigative Reporting. Examples of award-winning investigative stories include exposure of secret Central Intelligence Agency prisons in Eastern Europe, the torture of Iraqi prisoners by US forces, appalling care in veterans' hospitals, and job-related deaths of Mexican workers in the United States.

9.1.7 News Services

The mass media rely on the wire services for much of their international and national news. Wire services cover and transmit stories worldwide from their own staff and from reporters who work for the many newspapers and other organizations that belong to the services. Prominent wire services are the Associated Press (AP) and Reuters. The AP sends news to approximately 1,700 newspapers, 5,000 radio and television stations, and 8,500 other media outlets in over 100 countries.

Video feeds supplied by the AP and Reuters are the source of much of the televised international news. Subscribers are sent video accompanied by natural sound without narration and brief printed informational scripts. Four of CBS's eight foreign correspondents are based in London doing voice-overs for these feeds for broadcast on the network's news programs.

9.1.8 Prominence and Presentation

As a result of widely agreed-upon criteria of newsworthiness, the process of gathering the news, and the use of news services, the news media often report many of the same stories. Only a few stories are featured prominently due to limitations in broadcast prime time and front-page print space.

Nonetheless, there are some differences among the media in the range and type of news on which they focus. For example, the *New York Times*, with its stable of reporters in Washington, DC, and foreign correspondents, emphasizes government and politics in the United States and abroad. Cable news channels focus more on crimes and celebrities. Aside from a few stories, such as the war in Iraq and natural disasters, they give short shrift to foreign stories. In fact, the Fox News Channel has a segment titled "Around the World in 80 Seconds."

The media also differ stylistically in how they present the news. The *Times* does it with relative sobriety. Cable channels dramatize their reports by announcing "breaking news," using graphic captions, accompanying stories with pulsating music, engaging in fast-paced editing, and repeatedly admonishing viewers to "stay with us."

Television news is picture driven: stories with appealing, dramatic, or even available camera footage are more likely to be played prominently than those without. Viewers are unaware of what is not shown, what happened before or after the picture was taken, and whether or not the shot was staged. Camera angles, distance from the subject, especially close-ups, length of shot, camera movement, and editing all influence viewers' impressions. A picture may be worth a thousand words, but it can also mislead, as [Note 1.17 "Enduring Image"](#) reveals.

Enduring Image

The Overthrow of Saddam Hussein

- The toppling of a dictator's statue is an enduring image, symbolizing the literal collapse of a regime's authority and the massive uprising and joy of a population freed at last from tyranny. On April 9, 2003, a US mechanized vehicle using a cable pulled down Saddam Hussein's mammoth statue in Baghdad's Firdos Square. The square was sealed off by US marines. The few people in it were US soldiers, Iraqis from the United States, promoted "Free Iraqi Forces Militia" (comprising exiles who had recently been returned to the country by the Pentagon), and journalists.
 - News Reporting propaganda Baghdad Saddam Statue (click to see video)
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- The first photograph of the statue being pulled down reflects news values of vividness, drama, and conflict. It spectacularly hearkens back to the removal of statues of Lenin and Stalin after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union. The alternative photos, showing much more of the relatively empty square, lacked dramatic news values and thus their symbolic effects.
 - Because the news media found the dramatic image to be irresistible, they reinforced a frame, pushed by the Bush administration, of a jubilant Iraqi population welcoming its liberators. But the meaning of an image can change. Now, for many people, the falling statue represents the illusion of a US military success that turned into a quagmire of frustration.

9.1.9 Interactions and Types of Coverage

As we document throughout our book, people involved in public life understand that their election and reelection, their effectiveness in elected and appointed office, and their ability to achieve their policies often depend on how they and their deliberations and debates, disagreements and conflicts, cooperation and consensus, actions and inactions, and struggles for power, are portrayed by the media. They know that media depictions can influence people's opinions, understandings of policy problems and notions of solutions, and can encourage or discourage participation in politics.

They know that information is power. The more of it they have before others the better. They have aides who gather, synthesize, and summarize the news from newspapers and television, from talk shows, political publications (*Roll Call* and *The Hill*), polls, websites, and blogs (Parker, 2011). So they and their staff interact with media personnel to try to manage and manipulate the news and influence journalists' selection of stories and how they are framed. They present (spin) their behavior, activities, and actions, and policies and decisions, as positively as possible; they conceal, minimize, or put the best gloss on their mistakes and blunders.

They engage in public appearances, make speeches, hold press conferences, and stage newsworthy events. They also deploy an arsenal of savvy techniques such as brief, pithy phrases known as sound bites. Behind the scenes they bestow favors, such as giving access to sympathetic journalists; persuade; apply pressure; and engage in intimidation (Cook, 2005; Paletz, 2012).

Despite these attempts at manipulation, the news media's coverage of people in public life is not necessarily favorable. Three common types of coverage are lap-dog, watch-dog, and attack-dog journalism.

9.1.10 Lap Dogs

Journalists usually rely on policymakers as knowledgeable and convenient sources of information. Much news, therefore, consists of the debates about issues and policies among officials and politicians. Political scientist Lance Bennett and his colleagues call this indexing. The news media serve as lap dogs when the government's perspective dominates. This can take place when leaders of the opposition party and other politicians do not continually criticize and challenge the government's policies or do not articulate an alternative viewpoint to reporters to include in their stories (Bennett, 1996).

A notable example of the news media as lap dogs was their coverage of the Bush administration's claims in 2002–2003 that Iraq must be attacked because it possessed weapons of mass destruction. Leaders of the Democratic Party did not forcefully challenge the White House's official story, plans, and rationale. Most of the news media then transmitted the administration's arguments without subjecting them to sustained analysis and criticism.

9.1.11 Watchdogs

The news media are sometimes watchdogs, holding people in government and other powerful institutions accountable by scrutinizing and reporting their statements, activities, claimed accomplishments, and failures. This type of coverage can be provoked by dramatic events, such as Hurricane Katrina, to which the Bush administration responded unconvincingly. Journalists went to the scene, saw the devastation and havoc for themselves, and showed it directly to viewers. Outraged reporters asked so many impassioned questions of administration officials about their inadequate response to Katrina that the Salon website compiled a "Reporters Gone Wild" video clip (Bennett, Lawrence, & Livingston, 2007).

9.1.12 Attack Dogs

The news media can be attack dogs. President Richard M. Nixon observed, based on his many years in public life, that "for the press, progress is not news—trouble is news" (Safire, 1975). The news about government and politics is often negative, about blunders and disasters, scandals and corruption. This "gotcha" journalism can provoke a feeding frenzy in which reporters, like a pack of dogs, search for, uncover, and chew over every morsel of the story (Sabato, 1991). News coverage of President Clinton's relationship with White House intern Monica Lewinsky exemplified such a feeding frenzy.

9.1.12.1 Key Takeaways

In this section, we have explained how journalists decide what is news, how they acquire news (through beats, sources, investigative reporting, and other ways), and how they present news. We have described the techniques that people in public life use to manage and manipulate the news media to obtain positive and avoid negative depictions. And we have specified three ways that the news media can behave toward people in government and politics: as lap dogs, watchdogs, or attack dogs.

9.1.13 Exercises

1. What makes something news? How do journalists decide what to report as news?
2. Why was the close-up photograph of the statue of Saddam Hussein being pulled down so much more widely used in the media than the wide-angle shot? How does the need to tell an interesting story affect how the news gets reported?
3. What factors determine how journalists cover politics? When is their coverage of politicians more likely to be favorable, and when is it more likely to be critical?

9.1.14 References

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1. For journalists’ backgrounds, see David H. Weaver, Randal A. Beam, Bonnie J. Brownlee, Paul S. Voakes, and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist in the 21st Century* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2007), 20. ↩
 2. For a study of movie depictions of American journalism, see Matthew C. Ehrlich, *Journalism in the Movies* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004). ↩
 3. The differences between the photographs was brought to our attention in the May/June 2003 issue of *Extra!*, p. 8. ↩
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Learning Objectives

- Explain how objective journalism differs from story-driven journalism.
- Describe the effect of objectivity on modern journalism.
- Describe the unique nature of literary journalism.

Location, readership, political climate, and competition all contribute to rapid transformations in journalistic models and writing styles. Over time, however, certain styles—such as sensationalism—have faded or become linked with less serious publications, like tabloids, while others have developed to become prevalent in modern-day reporting. This section explores the nuanced differences among the most commonly used models of journalism.

9.2.1 Objective versus Story-Driven Journalism

In the late 1800s, a majority of publishers believed that they would sell more papers by reaching out to specific groups. As such, most major newspapers employed a partisan approach to writing, churning out political stories and using news to sway popular opinion. This all changed in 1896 when a then-failing paper, *The New York Times*, took a radical new approach to reporting: employing objectivity, or impartiality, to satisfy a wide range of readers.

9.2.2 The Rise of Objective Journalism

At the end of the 19th century, *The New York Times* found itself competing with the papers of Pulitzer and Hearst. The paper's publishers discovered that it was nearly impossible to stay afloat without using the sensationalist headlines popularized by its competitors. Although *The New York Times* publishers raised prices to pay the bills, the higher charge led to declining readership, and soon the paper went bankrupt. Adolph Ochs, owner of the once-failing *Chattanooga Times*, took a gamble and bought *The New York Times* in 1896. On August 18 of that year, Ochs made a bold move and announced that the paper would no longer follow the sensationalist style that made Pulitzer and Hearst famous, but instead would be “clean, dignified, trustworthy and impartial.” “Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1935, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0312.html>.

This drastic change proved to be a success. *The New York Times* became the first of many papers to demonstrate that the press could be “economically as well as ethically successful.” “Adolph S. Ochs Dead at 77; Publisher of Times Since 1896,” *New York Times*, April 9, 1935, <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0312.html>. With the help of managing editor Carr Van Anda, the new motto “All the News That’s Fit to Print,” and lowered prices, *The New York Times* quickly turned into one of the most profitable impartial papers of all time. Since the newspaper’s successful turnaround, publications around the world have followed *The New York Times*’ objective journalistic style, demanding that reporters maintain a neutral voice in their writing.

9.2.3 The Inverted Pyramid Style

One commonly employed technique in modern journalism is the inverted pyramid style. This style requires objectivity and involves structuring a story so that the most important details are listed first for ease of reading. In the inverted pyramid format, the most fundamental facts of a story—typically the who, what, when, where, and why—appear at the top in the lead paragraph, with nonessential information in subsequent paragraphs. The style arose as a product of the telegraph. The inverted pyramid proved useful when telegraph connections failed in the middle of transmission; the editor still had the most important information at the beginning. Similarly, editors could quickly delete content from the bottom up to meet time and space requirements. Chip Scanlan, “Writing from the Top Down: Pros and Cons of the Inverted Pyramid,” Poynter, June 20, 2003, www.poynter.org/how-tos/newsg...erted-pyramid/.

The reason for such writing is threefold. First, the style is helpful for writers, as this type of reporting is somewhat easier to complete in the short deadlines imposed on journalists, particularly in today’s fast-paced news business. Second, the style benefits editors who can, if necessary, quickly cut the story from the bottom without losing vital information. Finally, the style keeps in mind traditional readers, most of who skim articles or only read a few paragraphs, but they can still learn most of the important information from this quick read.

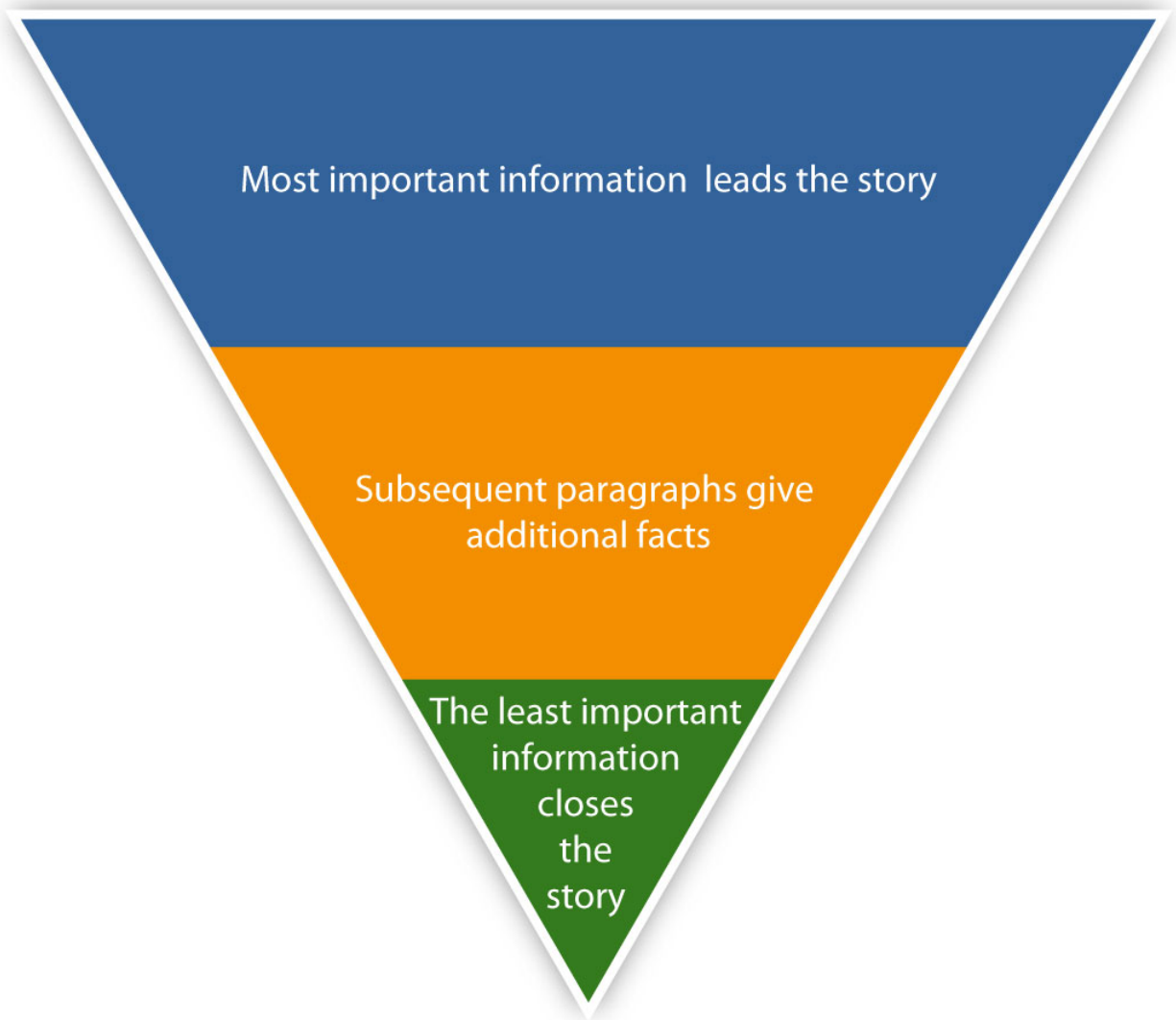


Figure 4.8

9.2.4 Interpretive Journalism

During the 1920s, objective journalism fell under critique as the world became more complex. Even though *The New York Times* continued to thrive, readers craved more than dry, objective stories. In 1923, *Time* magazine launched as the first major publication to step away from simple objectivity to try to provide readers with a more analytical interpretation of the news. As *Time* grew, people at some other publications took notice, and slowly editors began rethinking how they might reach out to readers in an increasingly interrelated world.

During the 1930s, two major events increased the desire for a new style of journalism: the Great Depression and the Nazi threat to global stability. Readers were no longer content with the who, what, where, when, and why of objective journalism. Instead, they craved analysis and a deeper explanation of the chaos surrounding them. Many papers responded with a new type of reporting that became known as interpretive journalism.

Interpretive journalism, following *Time*'s example, has grown in popularity since its inception in the 1920s and 1930s, and journalists use it to explain issues and to provide readers with a broader context for the stories that they encounter. According to Brant Houston, the executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors Inc., an interpretive journalist "goes beyond the basic facts of an event or topic to provide context, analysis, and possible consequences." Brant Houston, "Interpretive Journalism," *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*, 2008, www.blackwellreference.com/pu...3199514_ss82-1. When this new style was

first used, readers responded with great interest to the new editorial perspectives that newspapers were offering on events. But interpretive journalism posed a new problem for editors: the need to separate straight objective news from opinions and analysis. In response, many papers in the 1930s and 1940s “introduced weekend interpretations of the past week’s events ... and interpretive columnists with bylines.” Stephen J. A. Ward, “Journalism Ethics,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2008): 298. As explained by Stephen J. A. Ward in his article, “Journalism Ethics,” the goal of these weekend features was to “supplement objective reporting with an informed interpretation of world events.” Stephen J. A. Ward, “Journalism Ethics,” in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York: Routledge, 2008): 298.

9.2.5 Competition From Broadcasting

The 1930s also saw the rise of broadcasting as radios became common in most U.S. households and as sound–picture recordings for newsreels became increasingly common. This broadcasting revolution introduced new dimensions to journalism. Scholar Michael Schudson has noted that broadcast news “reflect[ed] ... a new journalistic reality. The journalist, no longer merely the relayer of documents and messages, ha[d] become the interpreter of the news.” Michael Schudson, “The Politics of Narrative Form: The Emergence of News Conventions in Print and Television,” in “Print Culture and Video Culture,” *Daedalus* 111, no. 4 (1982): 104. However, just as radio furthered the interpretive journalistic style, it also created a new problem for print journalism, particularly newspapers.

Suddenly, free news from the radio offered competition to the pay news of newspapers. Scholar Robert W. McChesney has observed that, in the 1930s, “many elements of the newspaper industry opposed commercial broadcasting, often out of fear of losing ad revenues and circulation to the broadcasters.” Robert W. McChesney, “Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935,” in “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992): 37. This fear led to a media war as papers claimed that radio was stealing their print stories. Radio outlets, however, believed they had equal right to news stories. According to Robert W. McChesney, “commercial broadcasters located their industry next to the newspaper industry as an icon of American freedom and culture.” Robert W. McChesney, “Media and Democracy: The Emergence of Commercial Broadcasting in the United States, 1927–1935,” in “Communication in History: The Key to Understanding” *OAH Magazine of History* 6, no. 4 (1992): 38. The debate had a major effect on interpretive journalism as radio and newspapers had to make decisions about whether to use an objective or interpretive format to remain competitive with each other.

The emergence of television during the 1950s created even more competition for newspapers. In response, paper publishers increased opinion-based articles, and many added what became known as op-ed pages. An op-ed page—short for *opposite the editorial page*—features opinion-based columns typically produced by a writer or writers unaffiliated with the paper’s editorial board. As op-ed pages grew, so did interpretive journalism. Distinct from news stories, editors and columnists presented opinions on a regularly basis. By the 1960s, the interpretive style of reporting had begun to replace the older descriptive style. Thomas Patterson, “Why Is News So Negative These Days?” *History News Network*, 2002, <http://hnn.us/articles/1134.html>.

9.2.6 Literary Journalism

Stemming from the development of interpretive journalism, literary journalism began to emerge during the 1960s. This style, made popular by journalists Tom Wolfe (formerly a strictly nonfiction writer) and Truman Capote, is often referred to as *New Journalism* and combines factual reporting with sometimes fictional narration. Literary journalism follows neither the formulaic style of reporting of objective journalism nor the opinion-based analytical style of interpretive journalism. Instead, this art form—as it is often termed—brings voice and character to historical events, focusing on the construction of the scene rather than on the retelling of the facts.

9.2.7 Important Literary Journalists



Figure 4.9

The works of Tom Wolfe are some of the best examples of literary journalism of the 1960s.

Tom Wolfe was the first reporter to write in the literary journalistic style. In 1963, while his newspaper, New York's *Herald Tribune*, was on strike, *Esquire* magazine hired Wolfe to write an article on customized cars. Wolfe gathered the facts but struggled to turn his collected information into a written piece. His managing editor, Byron Dobell, suggested that he type up his notes so that *Esquire* could hire another writer to complete the article. Wolfe typed up a 49-page document that described his research and what he wanted to include in the story and sent it to Dobell. Dobell was so impressed by this piece that he simply deleted the "Dear Byron" at the top of the letter and published the rest of Wolfe's letter in its entirety under the headline "There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby." The article was a great success, and Wolfe, in time, became known as the father of new journalism. When he later returned to work at the *Herald Tribune*, Wolfe brought with him this new style, "fusing the stylistic features of fiction and the reportorial obligations of journalism." Richard A. Kallan, "Tom Wolfe," in *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1992).

Truman Capote responded to Wolfe's new style by writing *In Cold Blood*, which Capote termed a "nonfiction novel," in 1966. George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. The tale of an actual murder that had taken place on a Kansas farm some years earlier, the novel was based on numerous interviews and painstaking research. Capote claimed that he wrote the book because he wanted to exchange his "self-creative world ... for the everyday objective world we all inhabit." George Plimpton, "The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel," *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. The book was praised for its straightforward, journalistic

style. *New York Times* writer George Plimpton claimed that the book “is remarkable for its objectivity—nowhere, despite his involvement, does the author intrude.” George Plimpton, “The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. After *In Cold Blood* was finished, Capote criticized Wolfe’s style in an interview, commenting that Wolfe “[has] nothing to do with creative journalism,” by claiming that Wolfe did not have the appropriate fiction-writing expertise. George Plimpton, “The Story Behind a Nonfiction Novel,” *New York Times*, January 16, 1966, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/97/12/28/home/capote-interview.html>. Despite the tension between these two writers, today they are remembered for giving rise to a similar style in varying genres.

9.2.8 The Effects of Literary Journalism

Although literary journalism certainly affected newspaper reporting styles, it had a much greater impact on the magazine industry. Because they were bound by fewer restrictions on length and deadlines, magazines were more likely to publish this new writing style than were newspapers. Indeed, during the 1960s and 1970s, authors simulating the styles of both Wolfe and Capote flooded magazines such as *Esquire* and *The New Yorker* with articles.

Literary journalism also significantly influenced objective journalism. Many literary journalists believed that objectivity limited their ability to critique a story or a writer. Some claimed that objectivity in writing is impossible, as all journalists are somehow swayed by their own personal histories. Still others, including Wolfe, argued that objective journalism conveyed a “limited conception of the ‘facts,’” which “often effected an inaccurate, incomplete story that precluded readers from exercising informed judgment.” Richard A. Kallan, “Tom Wolfe,” in *A Sourcebook of American Literary Journalism: Representative Writers in an Emerging Genre*, ed. Thomas B. Connery (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Press, 1992).

9.2.9 Advocacy Journalism and Precision Journalism

The reactions of literary journalists to objective journalism encouraged the growth of two more types of journalism: advocacy journalism and precision journalism. Advocacy journalists promote a particular cause and intentionally adopt a biased, nonobjective viewpoint to do so effectively. However, serious advocate journalists adhere to strict guidelines, as “an advocate journalist is not the same as being an activist” according to journalist Sue Careless. Sue Careless, “Advocacy Journalism,” *Interim*, May 2000, www.theinterim.com/2000/may/10advocacy.html. In an article discussing advocacy journalism, Careless contrasted the role of an advocate journalist with the role of an activist. She encourages future advocate journalists by saying the following:

A journalist writing for the advocacy press should practice the same skills as any journalist. You don’t fabricate or falsify. If you do you will destroy the credibility of both yourself as a working journalist and the cause you care so much about. News should never be propaganda. You don’t fudge or suppress vital facts or present half-truths. Sue Careless, “Advocacy Journalism,” *Interim*, May 2000, www.theinterim.com/2000/may/10advocacy.html.

Despite the challenges and potential pitfalls inherent to advocacy journalism, this type of journalism has increased in popularity over the past several years. In 2007, *USA Today* reporter Peter Johnson stated, “[i]ncreasingly, journalists and talk-show hosts want to ‘own’ a niche issue or problem, find ways to solve it, and be associated with making this world a better place.” Peter Johnson, “More Reporters Embrace an Advocacy Role,” *USA Today*, March 5, 2007, http://www.usatoday.com/life/television/news/2007-03-05-social-journalism_N.htm. In this manner, journalists across the world are employing the advocacy style to highlight issues they care about.

Oprah Winfrey: Advocacy Journalist

Television talk-show host and owner of production company Harpo Inc., Oprah Winfrey is one of the most successful, recognizable entrepreneurs of the late-20th and early-21st centuries. Winfrey has long been a news reporter, beginning in the late 1970s as a coanchor of an evening television program. She began hosting her own show in 1984, and as of 2010, the *Oprah Winfrey Show* is one of the most popular television programs on the air. Winfrey has long used her show as a platform for issues and concerns, making her one of today’s most famous advocacy journalists. While many praise Winfrey for using her celebrity to draw attention to causes she cares about, others criticize her techniques, claiming that she uses the advocacy style for self-promotion. As one critic writes, “I’m not sure how Oprah’s endless self-promotion of how she spent millions on a school in South Africa suddenly makes her ‘own’ the ‘education niche.’ She does own the trumpet-my-own-horn niche. But

that's not 'journalism.'"Debbie Schlusel, "USA Today Heralds 'Oprah Journalism,'" *Debbie Schlusel* (blog), March 6, 2007, <http://www.debbieschlusel.com/497/usa-today-heralds-oprah-journalism/>.

Yet despite this somewhat harsh critique, many view Winfrey as the leading example of positive advocacy journalism. Sara Grumbles claims in her blog "Breaking and Fitting the Mold": "Oprah Winfrey obviously practices advocacy journalism.... Winfrey does not fit the mold of a 'typical' journalist by today's standards. She has an agenda and she voices her opinions. She has her own op-ed page in the form of a million dollar television studio. Objectivity is not her strong point. Still, in my opinion she is a journalist."Sara Grumbles, "Breaking and Fitting the Mold," *Media Chatter* (blog), October 3, 2007, www.commajor.com/?p=1244.

Regardless of the arguments about the value and reasoning underlying her technique, Winfrey unquestionably practices a form of advocacy journalism. In fact, thanks to her vast popularity, she may be the most compelling example of an advocacy journalist working today.

Precision journalism emerged in the 1970s. In this form, journalists turn to polls and studies to strengthen the accuracy of their articles. Philip Meyer, commonly acknowledged as the father of precision journalism, says that his intent is to "encourage my colleagues in journalism to apply the principles of scientific method to their tasks of gathering and presenting the news."Philip Meyer, *Precision Journalism: A Reporter's Introduction to Social Science Methods*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), vii. This type of journalism adds a new layer to objectivity in reporting, as articles no longer need to rely solely on anecdotal evidence; journalists can employ hard facts and figures to support their assertions. An example of precision journalism would be an article on voting patterns in a presidential election that cites data from exit polls. Precision journalism has become more popular as computers have become more prevalent. Many journalists currently use this type of writing.

9.2.10 Consensus versus Conflict Newspapers

Another important distinction within the field of journalism must be made between consensus journalism and conflict journalism. Consensus journalism typically takes place in smaller communities, where local newspapers generally serve as a forum for many different voices. Newspapers that use consensus-style journalism provide community calendars and meeting notices and run articles on local schools, events, government, property crimes, and zoning. These newspapers can help build civic awareness and a sense of shared experience and responsibility among readers in a community. Often, business or political leaders in the community own consensus papers.

Conversely, conflict journalism, like that which is presented in national and international news articles in *The New York Times*, typically occurs in national or metropolitan dailies. Conflict journalists define news in terms of societal discord, covering events and issues that contravene perceived social norms. In this style of journalism, reporters act as watchdogs who monitor the government and its activities. Conflict journalists often present both sides of a story and pit ideas against one another to generate conflict and, therefore, attract a larger readership. Both conflict and consensus papers are widespread. However, because they serve different purposes and reach out to differing audiences, they largely do not compete with each other.

9.2.11 Niche Newspapers

Niche newspapers represent one more model of newspapers. These publications, which reach out to a specific target group, are rising in popularity in the era of Internet. As Robert Courtemanche, a certified journalism educator, writes, "[i]n the past, newspapers tried to be everything to every reader to gain circulation. That outdated concept does not work on the Internet where readers expect expert, niche content."Robert Courtemanche, "Newspapers Must Find Their Niche to Survive," Suite101.com, December 20, 2008, http://newspaperindustry.suite101.co...che_to_survive. Ethnic and minority papers are some of the most common forms of niche newspapers. In the United States—particularly in large cities such as New York—niche papers for numerous ethnic communities flourish. Some common types of U.S. niche papers are papers that cater to a specific ethnic or cultural group or to a group that speaks a particular language. Papers that cover issues affecting lesbians, gay men, and bisexual individuals—like the *Advocate*—and religion-oriented publications—like *The Christian Science Monitor*—are also niche papers.

9.2.12 The Underground Press

Some niche papers are part of the underground press. Popularized in the 1960s and 1970s as individuals sought to publish articles documenting their perception of social tensions and inequalities, the underground press typically caters to alternative and

countercultural groups. Most of these papers are published on small budgets. Perhaps the most famous underground paper is New York's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Village Voice*. This newspaper was founded in 1955 and declares its role in the publishing industry by saying:

The *Village Voice* introduced free-form, high-spirited and passionate journalism into the public discourse. As the nation's first and largest alternative newsweekly, the Voice maintains the same tradition of no-holds-barred reporting and criticism it first embraced when it began publishing fifty years ago. *Village Voice*, "About Us," www.villagevoice.com/about/index.

Despite their at-times shoestring budgets, underground papers serve an important role in the media. By offering an alternative perspective to stories and by reaching out to niche groups through their writing, underground-press newspapers fill a unique need within the larger media marketplace. As journalism has evolved over the years, newspapers have adapted to serve the changing demands of readers.

- Objective journalism began as a response to sensationalism and has continued in some form to this day. However, some media observers have argued that it is nearly impossible to remain entirely objective while reporting a story. One argument against objectivity is that journalists are human and are, therefore, biased to some degree. Many newspapers that promote objectivity put in place systems to help their journalists remain as objective as possible.
- Literary journalism combines the research and reporting of typical newspaper journalism with the writing style of fiction. While most newspaper journalists focus on facts, literary journalists tend to focus on the scene by evoking voices and characters inhabiting historical events. Famous early literary journalists include Tom Wolfe and Truman Capote.
- Other journalistic styles allow reporters and publications to narrow their editorial voice. Advocacy journalists encourage readers to support a particular cause. Consensus journalism encourages social and economic harmony, while conflict journalists present information in a way that focuses on views outside of the social norm.
- Niche newspapers—such as members of the underground press and those serving specific ethnic groups, racial groups, or speakers of a specific language—serve as important media outlets for distinct voices. The rise of the Internet and online journalism has brought niche newspapers more into the mainstream.

? Exercise 9.2.1

Please respond to the following writing prompts. Each response should be a minimum of one paragraph.

1. Find an objective newspaper article that includes several factual details. Rewrite the story in a literary journalistic style. How does the story differ from one genre to the other?
2. Was it difficult to transform an objective story into a piece of literary journalism? Explain.
3. Do you prefer reading an objective journalism piece or a literary journalism piece? Explain.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10.1: Interpersonal Communication in Mediated Contexts

10.1.1: Technology and Communication

10.1.2: The CMC Process

10.1.3: Taking the Self Online

10.1.4: Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication

10.1.5: Chapter Wrap-Up

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SECTION OVERVIEW

In today's world, we all spend a lot of time on various devices designed to make our lives easier. From smartphones to social media, we are all in constant contact with family, friends, coworkers, etc. Since the earliest days of communication technologies, we have always used these technologies to interact with one another. This chapter will examine how technology mediates our interpersonal relationships.

10.1.1: Technology and Communication

10.1.2: The CMC Process

10.1.3: Taking the Self Online

10.1.4: Theories of Computer-Mediated Communication

10.1.5: Chapter Wrap-Up

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Learning Outcomes

1. Explain the history of computer-mediated communication.
2. Recognize some of the important figures in the creation of the Internet, the World Wide Web, and computer-mediated communication.

Since the Internet's creation in 1969, public access to the Internet and the creation of the World Wide Web (WWW) in 1991, and the proliferation of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) through the late 1990s, the technology that shapes your life today and will shape your life tomorrow is still relatively new. Here are some relatively recent landmarks in social media sites, technology, and apps: LinkedIn (2003), iTunes (2003), Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), iPhone (2007), Drop Box (2008), Google Docs (2009), Kickstarter (2010), Google+ (2011), Google Glass (2012), Oculus Rift (2013), and iWatch (2014). As you can imagine, just limiting this list is hard. Some of these products you're probably very familiar with while others may be altogether new to you.

10.1.1.1 From Math to Punch Cards

Before we get started, it's essential to understand the evolution of what we call computer-mediated communication or CMC. Although in recent years some scholars have adopted the broader term "communication and technology," we don't think this is necessary, because a computer of some kind is always at the center of these communicative interactions.

So, our first question should be, what is a computer. In its earliest use, "computers" referred to people who performed massive numbers of calculations by hand or using a tool like an abacus (Figure 12.1.1a) or slide rule (Figure 12.1.1b). As you can imagine, this process wasn't exactly efficient and took a lot of human resources. The 2016 movie *Hidden Figures* relates the true story of a group of African American computers who created the calculations to land the first Astronaut on the Moon.¹

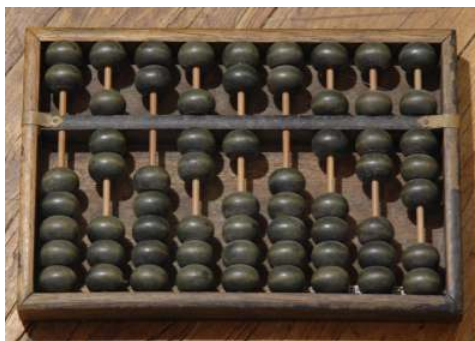


Figure 10.1.1.1a: Abacus

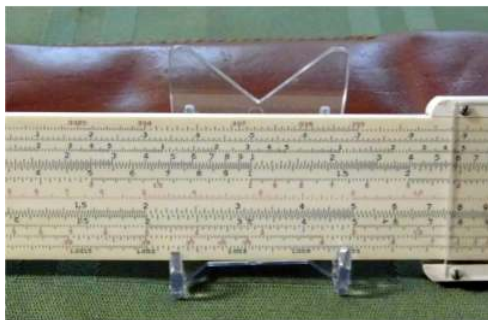


Figure 10.1.1.1b: Slide Ruler

The first mechanical ancestor of the computer we have today was created in 1801 by a Frenchman named Joseph Marie Jacquard, who created a loom that used punched wooden cards to weave fabric (Figure 12.1.2). The idea of "punch cards" would be the basis of many generations of computers up to the 1960s. Of course, the punch cards went from being wood cards to cardboard or cardstock over the course of their history. Some of the earliest statistical research in the field of communication was conducted

using punchcards. As you can imagine, between 1801 and the 1960s, many people worked to advance early computer technology. Many wonderful books can introduce you to the full history of how we came to the modern personal computer.²



Figure 10.1.1.2: Jacquard Loom

The 1970s saw the start of the explosion of the personal computer (e.g., the release of the Apple II line in 1977). In 1981, IBM released the IBM PC, also known as the Acorn, which ran on Microsoft DOS, which was followed up by Apple's Lisa in 1983, which had a graphic user interface. From that point until now, Microsoft and Apple (Macintosh) have cornered the market on personal computers.

10.1.1.2 Getting Computers to Interact

One thing that we have seen is that with each new computer development is new technologies emerging that have helped us communicate and interact. One significant development in 1969 changed the direction of human communication forever. Starting in 1965, researchers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology were able to get two computers to “talk” to each other. Of course, it's one thing to get two computers side-by-side to talk to each other, but could they get computers at a distance to talk to each other (in a manner similar to how people use telephones to communicate at a distance)?

Researchers at both UCLA and Stanford, with grant funding from the U.S. Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), set out to get computers at a distance to talk to each other. In 1969, UCLA student Charley Kline attempted the first computer-to-computer communication over a distance from his terminal in Los Angeles to a terminal at Stanford using a computer network. Although it had been possible for remote computers to interact with one another, scientists had to have separate computers for each remote computer they were connecting with. The 1969 breakthrough, was the creation of a system that could allow all computers to use a single network to interact.³ The first message to be sent was to be a simple one, “login.” The letter “l” was sent, then the letter “o,” and then the system crashed. So, the first message ever sent over what would become the Internet was “lo.” An hour later, Kline got the system up and running again, and the full word “login” was sent.

In the earliest years of the Internet, most people didn't know it existed. The Internet was primarily a tool for the Department of Defense to allow researchers at multiple sites across the country to work on defense projects. It was called the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (**ARPANET**). In 1973, the University College of London (England) and the Royal Radar Establishment (Norway) connected to ARPANET, and the term “Internet” was born. A year later, in 1974, a commercialized version of ARPANET called Telenet became the first Internet service provider (ISP).

10.1.1.3 Allowing People to Communicate

The early Internet was not exactly designed for your average user, so it took quite a bit of skill and “know how” to use the Internet and find information. Of course, while the Internet was developing, so was its capability for allowing people to communicate and interact with one another. In 1971, Ray Tomlinson was working on two programs that could be used over ARPANET: SNDMSG and READMAIL. From his lab at MIT, Tomlinson sent a message from one computer to another computer sitting right next to it, sending the message through ARPANET and creating the first electronic email. Tomlinson also forever changed our lives by introducing the “@” symbol as the separator the Internet uses when sending and receiving messages.

In addition to email, another breakthrough in computer-mediated communication was the development of Internet forums or **message/bulletin boards**, which are online discussion sites where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. Steve Walker created an early message board for ARPANET. The primary message list for professionals was MsgGroup. The number one message board that was not business related was SF-Lovers, a science fiction list. As you can see, from the earliest days of the Internet, people were using the Internet as a tool to communicate and interact with people who had similar interests.

One early realization about email and message boards was that people relied solely on text to interpret messages, which lacked nonverbal cues to aid in interpretation. On September 19, 1982, Scott Fahlman, a research professor of computer science at Carnegie Mellon, came up with an idea. You see, at Carnegie Mellon in the early 1980s (like most research universities at the time), they had their own bulletin board system (BBS), which discussed everything from campus politics to science fiction. As Fahlman noted, “Given the nature of the community, a good many of the posts were humorous, or at least attempted humor.” But “The problem was that if someone made a sarcastic remark, a few readers would fail to get the joke and each of them would post a lengthy diatribe in response.”⁴ After giving some thought to the problem, he posted the message seen in Figure 12.1.3. Thus, the **emoticon** (emotion icon) was born. An emoticon is a series of characters which is designed to help readers interpret a writer’s intended tone or the feelings the writer intended to convey. Over the years, many different emoticons were created like the smiley and sad faces, lol (laughing out loud), ROFL (rolling on the floor laughing), :-O (surprise), :-* (kiss), :-P (sticking your tongue out), :-/ (quizzical), :-X (sealed lips), 0:-) (angel), *\O/* (cheerleader), and so many others. As we’ve discussed previously in this text, so much of how we understand each other is based on our nonverbal behaviors, so these emoticons were an attempt to bring a lost part of the human communicative experience to a text-based communicative experience.

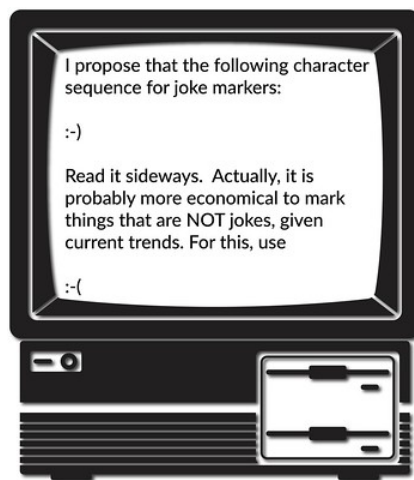


Figure 10.1.1.3: Emoticon Email

10.1.1.4 Asynchronous Communication

Some technologies are what we call **asynchronous**, a mediated form of communication in which the sender and receiver are not concurrently engaged in communication. When Person A sends a message, Person B does not need to be on the computer at the same time to receive the message. There could be a delay of hours or even days before that message is received and Person B responds. In this case, asynchronous messages are akin to letter writing.

We still engage in a wide range of asynchronous CMC. Some common forms of asynchronous communication today include email, texting, social media posts, and classroom discussion boards. Think about your own CMC behavior. What asynchronous methods

for CMC do you engage in daily?

10.1.1.5 Synchronous Communication

Let's switch gears for a bit and talk about the history of **synchronous** communication on the Internet. As the Internet grew and speed and infrastructure became more established, synchronous CMC was developed, a mediated form of communication in which the sender and receiver are concurrently engaged in communication. When Person A sends a message, Person B is receiving that message in real time, like they would in a face-to-face (FtF) interaction.

The first synchronous mode of communication was the chatroom. In 1988, Jarkko "WiZ" Oikarinen wrote the code for the first Internet Relay Chat (IRC) client and server at the University of Oulu, Finland. IRC was initially started as a system to replace an existing BBS, but WiZ realized that he had something completely different. With IRC, individuals from around the world could login using an IRC Chat Client (software on their computer), which would allow them to access a server elsewhere in the world to interact with people in real time (Figure 12.1.4). The invention of IRC led to the proliferation of chatrooms throughout the 1980s and 90s.

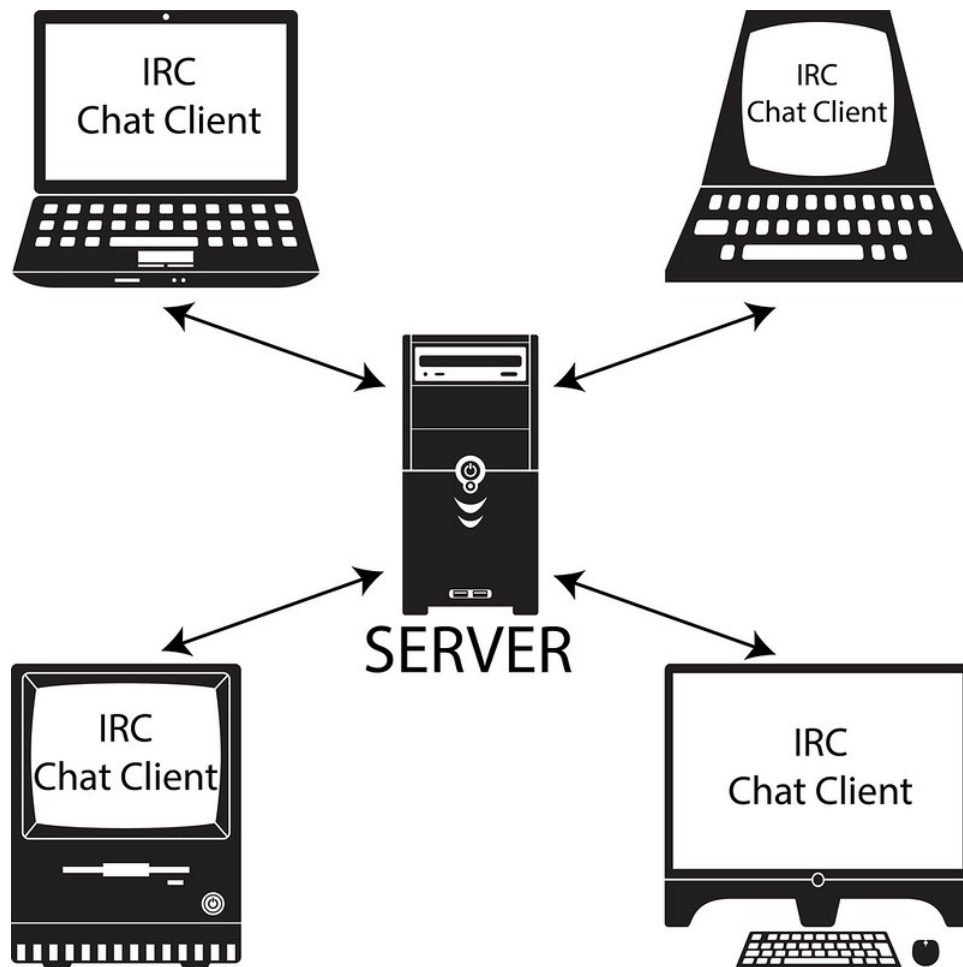


Figure 10.1.1.4: Internet Relay Chat

New technology was also developed through the European organization Groupe Speciale Mobile (GSM). The goal of the GSM was to create protocols for second-generation global cellphone networks. One of the protocols that was created was the **Short Messaging Service (SMS)**. The concept was developed in 1985 by Friedhelm Hillebrand and Bernard Ghillebaert, but the first SMS message wouldn't be sent until 1992. SMS originated from the radio telegraphy in radio memo pagers using standardized phone protocols, and was later defined as part of the Global System for Mobile Communications series of standards in 1985. The "short" part of SMS refers to the maximum length of the messages that could be sent at the time: 160 characters (letters, numbers, or symbols in the Latin alphabet). If you haven't figured it out yet, the system created by Hillebrand and Ghillebaert is the system

most of you use every day to send text messages. Although texting can be either asynchronous or synchronous, historically it was one of the earliest technologies to facilitate real-time (synchronous) online communication.

10.1.1.6 The World Wide Web

Our last major invention that indeed was groundbreaking came about in 1990. Tim Berners-Lee, a scientist working for Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire (CERN), had an idea to help capture information from the people who worked at CERN. The typical length of time someone spent conducting research at CERN was only two years, so that meant a lot of new people coming and going without a way to capture what was being done. As Berners-Lee noted, “The actual observed working structure of the organisation is a multiply connected ‘Web’ whose interconnections evolve with time.”⁵ Furthermore, “The technical details of past projects are sometimes lost forever, or only recovered after a detective investigation in an emergency. Often, the information has been recorded, it just cannot be found.”⁶ You see, Berners-Lee realized that so much information is learned on the job and then leaves with the people as they leave the job. Berners-Lee proposed a new system for keeping electronic information. After getting some initial positive feedback, Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau wrote a management report explaining hypertext:

HyperText is a way to link and access information of various kinds as a Web of nodes in which the user can browse at will. It provides a single user interface to large classes of information (reports, notes, data-bases, computer documentation and on line help). We propose a simple scheme incorporating servers already available at CERN... A program which provides access to the hypertext world we call a browser...⁷

CERN was not really concerned with the Internet as its primary scope and emphasis, so CERN and Berners-Lee agreed to release the source code for the World Wide Web (WWW) to the world in April 1993. In 1994, Berners-Lee left CERN and took a job at MIT where he created the International World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) to develop common standards for communication on the WWW. W3C still exists today, and the WWW celebrated its 30th birthday on March 10, 2019. The 5th variation of the hypertext markup language (HTML) created by the W3C is currently in use. You’re probably using HTML5 daily and don’t even realize it. As the W3C notes, “HTML5 contains powerful capabilities for Web-based applications with more powerful interaction, video support, graphics, more styling effects, and a full set of APIs. HTML5 adapts to any device, whether desktop, mobile, tablet, or television.”⁸

Key Takeaways

- Starting with the invention of the Internet in 1969, computer-mediated communication has evolved over the years as technology has advanced.
- Many important figures have helped create computer-mediated communication as we know it today. Some of the key players include Ray Tomlinson (inventor of email), Scott Fahlman (creator of emoticons/emojis), Jarkko “WiZ” Oikarinen (inventor of chatrooms), Friedhelm Hillebrand and Bernard Ghillebaert (creators of text messaging), and Tim Berners-Lee (inventor of the World Wide Web). These are just a handful of the many women and men who had a part in the development of computer-mediated communication.

Exercises

- When you look back at your own life, which computer-mediated technologies do you remember interacting with? Think back to your earliest experiences with CMC. How as your own CMC behavior and use of technology evolved over time.
- Check out the World Wide Web Consortium’s (W3C) website (www.w3.org/) and see what projects they’re working on today. Why is the W3C still relevant today?

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Learning Outcomes

1. Differentiate between synchronous and asynchronous communication.
2. Explain the role of nonverbal cues in computer-mediated communication.
3. Describe the various rules and norms associated with computer-mediated communication and their importance to netiquette.
4. Examine the human communication factors related to computer-mediated communication.
5. Discuss the process and importance of forming impressions online.

As interpersonal communication scholars, our interest in CMC is less about the technologies that people are using and more about how people are using technology to interact with one another. So instead of focusing on how one goes about coding new software, interpersonal communication scholars focus on how new technologies and software help facilitate interpersonal communication. For example, Pat and Sam are playing the latest Massive Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game (e.g., Word of Warcraft, Fortnite). In Figure 12.2.1 we have two people playing a video game over the together but from different locations. Through a technology called VoIP, Sam and Pat can play video games at the same time while talking to each other through the use of headsets.

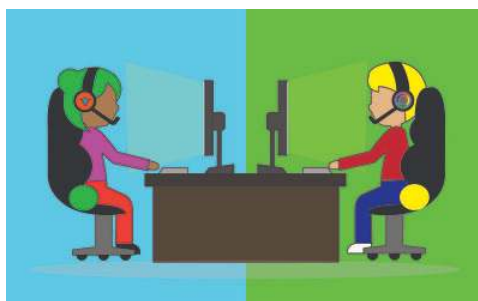


Figure 10.1.2.1: Video Game Play

10.1.2.1 Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication

In this section, we're going to delve more deeply into the areas of synchronous and asynchronous communication. In Figure 12.2.2, Sam and Pat are in some kind of underworld, fiery landscape. Pat is playing a witch character, and Sam is playing a vampire character. The two can coordinate their movements to accomplish in-game tasks because they can talk freely to one another while playing the game in real time. As previously discussed, this type of CMC is synchronous communication, or communication that happens in real time. Conversely, asynchronous communication is the exchange of messages with a time lag. In other words, in asynchronous communication, people can communicate on their own schedules as time permits instead of in real time. For example, Figure 12.2.2 shows a conversation between two college students. In this case, two college students are using SMS, commonly called texting) to interact with each other. The conversation starts at 2:25 PM. The first person initiates the conversation, but doesn't get a response until 3:05 PM. The third turn in the interaction then doesn't happen until 5:40 PM. In this exchange, the two people interacting can send responses at their convenience, which is one of the main reasons people often rely on asynchronous communication. Other common forms of asynchronous communication include emails, instant messaging, online discussions, etc....



Figure 10.1.2.2: Asynchronous Communication via SMS (Text Messaging)

Now, is it possible for people to use the same SMS technology to interact synchronously? Of course. One of our coauthors remembers two students on a trip who were sitting next to each other and texting back-and-forth because they didn't want their conversation to be overheard by others in the van. Their interaction was clearly mediated, and in real time, so it would be considered synchronous communication.

10.1.2.2 Nonverbal Cues

One issue related to CMC is nonverbal communication. Historically, most of the media people have used to interact with one another have been asynchronous and text-based, making it difficult to fully ascertain the meaning behind a string of words. Mary J. Culnan and M. Lynne Markus believe that the functions nonverbal behaviors meet in interpersonal interactions simply go unmet in CMC.⁹ If so, interpersonal communication must always be inherently impersonal when it's conducted using computer-mediated technologies. This perspective has three underlying assumptions:

1. Communication mediated by technology filters out communicative cues found in FtF interaction,
2. Different media filter out or transmit different cues, and
3. Substituting technology-mediated for FtF communication will result in predictable changes in intrapersonal and interpersonal variables.¹⁰

Let's breakdown these assumptions. First, CMC interactions "filter out" communicative cues found in FtF interactions. For example, if you're on the telephone with someone, you can't make eye contact or see their gestures, facial expressions, etc.... If you're reading an email, you have no nonverbal information to help you interpret the message because there is none. In these examples, the nonverbal cues have been "filtered out" by the media being used. We will revisit this information later in this chapter when we look at a range of theories related to CMC.

Unfortunately, even if we don't have the nonverbals to help us interpret a message, we interpret the message using our perception of how the sender intended us to understand this message, which is often wrong. How many times have you seen an incorrectly read text or email start a conflict? Of course, one of the first attempts to recover some sense of nonverbal meaning was the emoticon that we discussed earlier in this chapter.

10.1.2.3 CMC Rules and Norms

As with any type of communication, some rules and norms govern how people communicate with one another. For example, Twitter has an extensive Terms of Service policy that covers a wide range of communication rules. For our purposes here, let's examine their rules related to hate speech:

Hateful conduct: You may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease. We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories.

Hateful imagery and display names: You may not use hateful images or symbols in your profile image or profile header. You also may not use your username, display name, or profile bio to engage in abusive behavior, such as targeted harassment or expressing hate towards a person, group, or protected category.¹¹

This statement is an obvious example of a rule that exists on the Twitter platform. Of course, some have argued that these rules are pretty flexible at times, given the type of hateful political speech that is often Tweeted by different political figures.

In addition to clearly spelled out rules that govern how people communicate via different technologies, there are also norms. A norm, in this context, is an accepted standard for how one communicates and interacts with others in the CMC environment. For example, one norm by TYPING IN ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, which is considered yelling, people can get frustrated. There's actually not a consensus on when the use of all caps as a form of yelling first came to be. We do know that newspapers in the 1880s often used all capital letters to emphasize headlines (basically have them jump off the page). At some point in the early 1980s, using all caps as a form of yelling became quite the norm, which was noted in a message post by Dave Decot in 1984 (Figure 12.2.3).¹²

In this example, you see three different attempts to create possible systems for emphasizing words. The first is the use of all capital letters for making words seem "louder," which, as already mentioned, eventually became known as yelling.



Figure 10.1.2.3: The Creation of YELLING

10.1.2.4 Netiquette

Over the years, numerous norms have developed to help individuals communicate in the CMC context. They're so common that we have a term for them, netiquette. **Netiquette** is the set of professional and social rules and norms that are considered acceptable and polite when interacting with another person(s) through mediating technologies. Let's breakdown this definition.

Research Spotlight

In a 2019 study conducted by Jale Ataşalar and Aikaterini Michou, the researchers set out to examine how mindfulness related to problematic Internet use (i.e., Internet addiction). This study was conducted in Ankara, Turkey, and examined 165 Turkish early adolescents (mean age was 13).

To measure mindfulness, the researchers revised the Mindful Attention Awareness



Scale created by Kirk Brown and Richard Ryan.¹³ The revised scale was used to measure the degree to which individuals engaged in mindful behaviors while online.

Overall, the researchers found that people who were mindful online were less likely to report engaging in problematic Internet use.

Ataşalar, J., & Michou, A. (2019). Coping and mindfulness: Mediators between need satisfaction and generalized problematic Internet use. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 31(2), 110–115. doi. org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000230

10.1.2.4.1 Contexts

First, our definition of netiquette emphasizes that different contexts can create different netiquette needs. Specifically, how one communicates professionally and how one communicates socially are often quite different. For example, you may find it entirely appropriate to say, “What’s up?!” at the beginning of an email to a friend, but you would not find it appropriate to start an email to your boss in this same fashion. Furthermore, it may be entirely appropriate to downplay or disregard spelling errors or grammatical problems in a text you send to a friend, but it is completely inappropriate to have those same errors and problems in a text sent to a professional-client or coworker. One of the biggest challenges many employers have with young employees who are fresh out of college is that they don’t know how to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate communicative behavior in differing contexts.

This lack of professionalism is also a problem commonly discussed by college and university faculty and staff. Think about the last email you sent to one of your professors? Was this email professional? Did you remember to sign your name? You’d be amazed at the lack of professionalism many college and university faculty and staff see in the emails sent by your peers. Here are some general guidelines for sending professional emails:

- Include a concise, direct subject line.
- Do not mark something as “urgent” unless it really is.
- Begin with a proper greeting (Dear Mr. X, Professor Y:, etc.)
- Double-check your grammar.
- Correct any spelling mistakes.
- Include only essential information. Be concise.
- State your intention clearly and directly.
- Make sure your message is logically organized.
- Be polite and ensure your tone is appropriate.
- Avoid all CAPS or all lowercase letters.
- Avoid “textspeak” (e.g., plz, lol)
- If you want the recipient to do something, make the desired action very clear.
- End with a polite closing (using “please” and “thank you”).
- Do not send an email if you’re angry or upset.
- Edit and proofread before hitting “send.”
- Use “Reply All” selectively (very selectively).

10.1.2.4.2 Rules and Norms

Second, our definition of netiquette combines both rules and norms. Part of being a competent communicator in a CMC environment is knowing what the rules are and respecting them. For example, if you know that Twitter’s rules ban hate speech, then engaging in hate speech using the Twitter platform shows a disregard for the rules and would not be considered appropriate behavior. In essence, hate speech is anti-netiquette. We also do not want to ignore the fact that in different CMC contexts, different norms often develop. For example, maybe you’re taking an online course and you’re required to engage in weekly discussions. One common norm in an online class is to check the previously replies to a post before posting your reply. If you don’t, then you are jumping into a conversation that’s already occurred and throwing your two-cents in without knowing what’s happening.

10.1.2.4.3 Acceptable and Polite CMC Behavior

Third, netiquette attempts to govern what is both acceptable and polite. Yelling via a text message may be acceptable to some of your friends, but is it polite given that typing in all caps is generally seen as yelling? Being polite shows others respect and

demonstrates socially appropriate behaviors.

Mindfulness Activity



If you've spent any time online recently, you may have noticed that it can definitely feel like a cesspool. There are many trolls, making the Internet a place where civil interactions are hard to come by. Mitch Abblett came up with five specific guidelines for interacting with others online:

1. Be kind and compassionately courteous with all posts and comments.
2. No hate speech, bullying, derogatory or biased comments regarding self, others in the community, or others in general.
3. No Promotions or Spam.
4. Do not give mental health advice.
5. Respect everyone's privacy and be thoughtful in the nature and depth of your sharing.¹⁴

Think about your interactions with others in the online world. Have you ever communicated with others without considering whether your own intentions and attitude are appropriate?

10.1.2.4.4 Online Interaction

Fourth, our definition involves interacting with others. This interaction can be one-on-one, or this interaction can be one-to-many. The first category, one-on-one, is more in the wheelhouse of interpersonal communication. Examples include sending a text to one person, sending an email to one person, talking to one person via Skype or Zoom, etc. The second category, one-to-many, requires its own set of rules and norms. Some examples of common one-to-many CMC could include engaging in a group chat via texting, "replying all" to an email received, being interviewed by a committee via Skype, etc. Notice that our examples for one-to-many involve the same technologies used for one-on-one communication.

10.1.2.4.5 Range of Mediating

Technologies Lastly, netiquette can vary based on the different types of mediating technologies. For example, it may be considered entirely appropriate for you to scream, yell, and curse when your playing with your best friend on Fortnite, but it wouldn't be appropriate to use the same communicative behaviors when engaging in a video conference over Skype. Both technologies use VoIP, but the platforms and the contexts are very different, so they call for different types of communicative behaviors. Some differences will exist in netiquette based on whether you're in an entirely text-based medium (e.g., email, texting) or one where people can see you (e.g., Skype, WebEx, Zoom). Ultimately, engaging in netiquette requires you to learn what is considered acceptable and polite behavior across a range of different technologies.

10.1.2.5 Communication Factors

Communication factors are an essential part of understanding how computer-mediated communication impacts interpersonal relationships. In this section, we're going to examine two specific communication factors that have been researched in a variety of CMC contexts: communication apprehension and impression formation.

10.1.2.5.1 Communication Apprehension

Most of the research examining CA and CMC started at the beginning of the 21st Century. Until 1996 when America Online (AOL) provided unlimited access to the Internet for a low monthly fee, most people did not have access to the Internet because of the cost. It wasn't until the public became more actively involved in interacting through technology that communication scholars became interested in communication traits related to CMC. One early study conducted by Scott W. Campbell and Michael R. Neer investigated whether an individual's level of communication apprehension (CA) could predict how they felt about CMC.¹⁵ In the study, the authors predicted that an individual's level of CA could predict whether the individuals believed that CMC was an

effective medium for interpersonal communication; however, the researchers did not find a significant relationship. Furthermore, the researchers found that there wasn't a significant relationship between CA and people's satisfaction with their CMC experiences. Here's how the researchers attempted to make sense of these findings:

One plausible interpretation is that high apprehensives simply do not view CMC positively or negatively. Yet, they recognize that it reduces the threat posed to them in FtF settings. An equally plausible explanation is that high apprehensives do not regard CMC as an interpersonal obstacle to overcome because it is not FtF, but a substitute that fails to challenge or override their apprehension level.¹⁶

Jason S. Wrench and Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter furthered the inquiry into CA and CMC by exploring how people reacted to different types of CMC. Specifically, Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter were interested in examining email CA, online chatting CA, and instant messaging CA. You can see the measures that Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter created for this study in Table 12.2.1. It's important to emphasize that the technologies listed in Table 12.2.1 here were the technologies most commonly used by the public when this study was conducted in the mid-2000s.

Table 12.2.1 Computer-Mediated Communication Apprehension (CMCA)

Instructions: This set of questions asks you about how you feel while communicating using email. If you have never used email, please leave this section blank. Work quickly and indicate your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	---------------------

1. When communicating using email, I feel tense.
2. When communicating using email, I feel calm.
3. When communicating using email, I feel jittery.
4. When communicating using email, I feel nervous.
5. When communicating using email, I feel relaxed.

Instructions: This set of questions asks you about how you feel while communicating in online chat rooms, IRCs, or MUDDS. If you have never used chat rooms, IRCs, or MUDDS, please leave this section blank. Work quickly and indicate your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	---------------------

1. When communicating in a chat room, IRC, or MUDD, I feel tense.
2. When communicating in a chat room, IRC, or MUDD, I feel calm.
3. When communicating in a chat room, IRC, or MUDD, I feel jittery.
4. When communicating in a chat room, IRC, or MUDD, I feel nervous.
5. When communicating in a chat room, IRC, or MUDD, I feel relaxed.

Instructions: This set of questions asks you about how you feel while communicating using Internet Messaging Programs like AOL Instant Messenger, Yahoo Messenger, or MSN Messenger. If you have never used Internet Messaging Programs, please leave this section blank. Work quickly and indicate your first impression. Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you:

Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
------------------------	---------------	--------------	------------	---------------------

1. When communicating using an Internet messaging program, I feel tense.
2. When communicating using an Internet messaging program, I feel calm.
3. When communicating using an Internet messaging program, I feel jittery.
4. When communicating using an Internet messaging program, I feel nervous.
5. When communicating using an Internet messaging program, I feel relaxed.

Scoring

Email Apprehension

A: Add scores for items 1, 3, and 4 and place total on line. _____

B: Add scores for items 2 and 5 and place total on line. _____

Take the total from A and add 12 to the score. Place the new number on the line. _____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line. _____

Chatting Apprehension

A: Add scores for items 6, 8, 9, 10 and place total on line. _____

B: Add scores for items 7 and 10 and place total on line. _____

Take the total from A and add 12 to the score. Place the new number on the line. _____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line. _____

Instant Messaging Apprehension

A: Add scores for items 11, 13, and 14 and place total on line. _____

B: Add scores for items 12 and 15 and place total on line. _____

Take the total from A and add 12 to the score. Place the new number on the line. _____

Final Score: Now subtract B from C. Place your final score on the line. _____

Interpretation

Scores on all three measures should be between 5 and 25. For email apprehension, scores under 9.5 are considered low and scores over 9.5 are considered high. For chatting apprehension, scores under 11.5 are considered low and scores over 11.5 are considered high. For instant messaging apprehension, scores under 9 are considered low and scores over 9 are considered high.

Reference

Wrench, J. S., & Punyanunt-Carter, N. M. (2007). The relationship between computer-mediated-communication competence, apprehension, self-efficacy, perceived confidence, and social presence. *Southern Journal of Communication*, 72(4), 355-378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10417940701667696>

In addition to CMCA, Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter were also interested in an individual's skill levels with CMC. CMC skill was defined as three distinct concepts: computer efficacy (individuals' confidence in using a computer), Internet efficacy (individuals' confidence in using the Internet), and CMC competence. Brian H. Spitzberg believed that CMC competence consisted of three important factors: 1) people must be motivated to interact with others competently, 2) people must possess specialized knowledge and technical know-how, and 3) people must learn the rules and norms for communicating in the CMC context.¹⁷ Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter found that CMCA was negatively related to computer efficacy, Internet efficacy, and CMC competence.

In a subsequent study by Daniel Hunt, David Atkin, and Archana Krishnan, the researchers set out to examine CMCA and Facebook interactions, using a revised version of the Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter CMCA scales to measure Facebook CA.¹⁸ The study showed that CMCA decreased one's motivation to use Facebook as a tool for interpersonal communication. These findings were similar to those of Narissra M. Punyanunt-Carter, J. J. De La Cruz, and Jason S. Wrench, who examined CMCA on the social media app Snapchat.¹⁹ In this study, the researchers examined CMCA with regards to satisfying a combination of both functional and entertainment needs. Functional needs were defined as needs that drive an individual to accomplish something (e.g., feel less lonely, solve a problem, meet new people, decision making). Entertainment needs were defined as needs that allow an individual to keep her/him/themselves occupied (e.g., because it's fun, because it's convenient, communicate easily). In this study, Punyanunt-Carter, De La Cruz, and Wrench found that individuals with high levels of Snapchat CA were more likely to use Snapchat for functional purposes than for entertainment purposes.

In a second study conducted by Punyanunt-Carter, De La Cruz, and Wrench, the researchers set out to examine social media CA in relation to introversion, social media use, and social media addiction.²⁰ In this study, the researchers found that social media CA was positively related to introversion, which is in line with previous research examining CA and introversion. Furthermore, introversion was negatively related to social media use, but social media CA was not related to social media use. Lastly, both social

media CA and introversion were negatively related to social media addiction. Overall, this shows that individuals with social media CA are just not as likely to use social media, so they're less likely to become addicted to it.

So, what does all of this tell us? From our analysis of CA and CMC, we've come to understand that people with high levels of CA tend to function better in a CMC environment than in a FtF one, they're still less likely to engage in CMC as compared to those people with low levels of CMCA. People with low levels of CMCA just see CMC as another platform for communication.

10.1.2.5.2 Online Impression Formation

In the 21st Century, so much of what we do involves interacting with people online. How we present ourselves to others through our online persona (impression formation) is very important. How we communicate via social media and how professional our online persona is can be a determining factor in getting a job.

It's important to understand that in today's world, anything you put online can be found by someone else. According to the 2018 CareerBuilder.com social recruiting survey, a survey of more than 1,000 hiring managers, 70% admit to screening potential employees using social media, and 66% use search engines to look up potential employees.²¹ In fact, having an online persona can be very beneficial. Forty-seven percent of hiring managers admit to not calling a potential employee when the employee does not have an online presence. You may be wondering what employers are looking for when they check out potential employees online. The main things employers look for are information to support someone's qualifications (58%), whether or not an individual has a professional online persona (50%), to see what others say about the potential candidate (34%), and information that could lead a hiring manager to decide not to hire someone (22%).²² According to CareerBuilder.com, here are the common reasons someone doesn't get a job because of her/his/their online presence:

- Job candidate posted provocative or inappropriate photographs, videos or information: 40 percent
- Job candidate posted information about their alcohol or drug use: 36 percent
- Job candidate made discriminatory comments related to race, gender, religion, etc.: 31 percent
- Job candidate was linked to criminal behavior: 30 percent • Job candidate lied about qualifications: 27 percent
- Job candidate had poor communication skills: 27 percent
- Job candidate bad-mouthed their previous company or fellow employee: 25 percent
- Job candidate's screen name was unprofessional: 22 percent
- Job candidate shared confidential information from previous employers: 20 percent
- Job candidate lied about an absence: 16 percent
- Job candidate posted too frequently: 12 percent²³

As you can see, many organizations believe that what you put online says a lot about you as a person, so they are checking the Internet for information. If what you have online is inappropriate, it may prevent you from getting hired, but fortunately, what you have online can also help get you hired. The same CareerBuilder.com study found that 57% of hiring managers have found information about a candidate online that has solidified their decision to hire that person. Here is a list of what hiring managers found that made them want to hire someone:

- Job candidate's background information supported their professional qualifications for the job: 37 percent
- Job candidate was creative: 34 percent
- Job candidate's site conveyed a professional image: 33 percent
- Job candidate was well-rounded, showed a wide range of interests: 31 percent
- Got a good feel for the job candidate's personality, could see a good fit within the company culture: 31 percent
- Job candidate had great communications skills: 28 percent
- Job candidate received awards and accolades: 26 percent
- Other people posted great references about the job candidate: 23 percent
- Job candidate had interacted with company's social media accounts: 22 percent
- Job candidate posted compelling video or other content: 21 percent
- Job candidate had a large number of followers or subscribers: 18 percent²⁴

As you can see, having an online presence is important in the 21st Century. Some people make the mistake of having no social media presence, which can backfire. In today's social media society, having no online presence can look very strange to hiring

managers. You should consider your social media presence as an extension of your resume. At the very least, you should have a profile on LinkedIn, the social networking site most commonly used by corporate recruiters.²⁵

Research Spotlight



Mikaela Pitcan, Alice E. Marwick, and Danah Boyd set out to explore how young people of low socioeconomic status handled issues of privacy and presentation in social media. The researchers interviewed 28 young adults who considered themselves to be upwardly mobile. The researchers found two general themes through their interviews: respectability tactics and judgments of female sexuality.

First, the researchers found that the participants “self-censored in a manner they described as presenting a ‘neutral’ or ‘vanilla’ face, catering to the respectability norms of the most powerful potential viewers—often potential employers or highstatus community members—rather than peers.”²⁶ The participants realized that having a social media presence was important, but they also knew that others could judge their social media use, so they were cognitively aware of what they posted. Furthermore, the participants were cognizant that their social media use today could be read by others in the future, so they had to consider a long-term perspective when it came to appropriateness online.

Second, there was a pattern of judging females’ use of social media in sexually explicit ways. When it came to respectfully presenting one’s self online, women were judged more harshly for their inclusion of sexually themed posts.

Pitcan, M., Marwick, A. E., & Boyd, D. (2018). Performing a vanilla self: Respectability politics, social class, and the digital world. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(3), 163-179. doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy008

10.1.2.6 Co-Present Interactions and Mediated Communication

For this discussion, we need to focus on the idea of co-present interactions, in which people are physically occupying the same space while interacting with one another. Historically, most interpersonal communication has involved co-present interactions, but with the advent of a range of communication technologies, people no longer have to be co-present to interact. On the flip side, there are many people who are co-present but use technology as a way of avoiding FtF interactions with those around them. One of our professor friends recently remarked, “when I started my career, I always had to tell students to quiet down at the beginning of class. Now, they’re already quiet because they’re all looking at their cellphones ignoring those around them.”

Now we often have to encourage collocated social interactions, and we wonder how we can get people sitting next to each other to talk to one another. Thomas Olsson, Pradthana Jarusriboonchai, Paweł Woźniak, Susanna Paasovaara, Kaisa Väänänen, and Andrés Lucero argue that there are two basic communication problems facing people today, “(1) the use of current technology disrupting ongoing social situations, and (2) lack of social interaction in collocated situations where it would be desirable.”²⁷ When people don’t interact with one another, they tend to become more socially isolated and lonely, which can lead to a feeling of disengagement with those around them.

How many times have you seen people eating out together yet spending the entire time on their smartphones? Many people believe that this type of multitasking actually enhances productivity, but research tends to disagree with this notion. One study actually demonstrated that when people are confronted with constant distractions like phones ringing or email alerts chiming on a smartphone, people lose an average of 10 IQ points due to these distractions.²⁸ This drop in IQ is equivalent to missing an entire night of sleep. Furthermore, those generations that have grown up with technology are more likely to engage in multitasking behavior.²⁹ In a 2014 study conducted by Jonathan Bowman and Roger Pace, the researchers tested the impact of cell phone usage vs. FtF conversations while performing a complex cognitive task.³⁰ Not surprisingly, individuals who interacted via cell phones were less adept at performing the task than those engaged in FtF interactions. Furthermore, individuals involved in the FtF interactions were more satisfied with their interactions than their peers using a cellphone. The authors of the article also found that, “People think they are effectively communicating their message while dual-tasking even though they are not.”³¹

So how can technology benefit social interactions? In the Olsson et al. study, the researchers examined several different studies that were designed to help foster collocated social interactions.³² Table 12.2.2 from the Olsson et al. illustrates the basic findings from their study.

Table 12.2.2 Mapping the social design objectives and design approaches interpreted from the papers to abstract enhancement categories (Roles of Technology)

Role of Technology	Social Design Objectives	Design Approaches
Enable (previous work beyond which the reviewed literature explores)		
Facilitate	• Facilitating ongoing social situations • Enriching means of social interaction • Supporting sense of community • Breaking ice in new encounters	• Shared digital workspace • Open space for shared activity • Topic suggestions • Disclosing information about others
Invite	• Increasing awareness • Revealing common ground • Avoiding cocooning in social silos • Engaging people in collective activity	• Open space for shared activity • Matchmaking • Self-expression • Topic suggestions • Open space for shared activity
Encourage	• Encouraging, incentivizing or triggering people to interact	• Introducing constraints

In Table 12.2.2 you are introduced to four different ways that technology can help facilitate collocated social interaction. You are also presented with the design objectives for each of these different ways to encourage collocated social interaction along with specific design approaches that technology creators can use to help foster collocated social interaction. Let's look at each of these in turn.

10.1.2.6.1 Enabling

First, “**enabling** interaction refers to the role of a technological artifact making it possible or allowing for social interaction to take place.”³³ The goal of enabling is to set up situations where collocated social interaction is possible. As such, there's less information about specific design objectives and approaches even though most of the research in the area of helping people interact has historically focused on enabling.

10.1.2.6.2 Facilitating

Second, “**facilitating** interaction refers to making it easier to converse, collaborate or otherwise socially interact, or to support desirable feelings, equality or suitable interaction dynamics while doing so.”³⁴ The goal of facilitating collocated social interactions is to help ease tension and encourage people to interact while minimizing possible negative experiences people may face. One of the ways to achieve facilitating is to have an open space for a shared activity. For example, an online college or university may have coffee shop nights or alumni events in various cities. The alumni events don't necessarily have specific agendas, but the goal is to provide a space where people can meet and interact.

10.1.2.6.3 Inviting

Third, “**inviting** interaction is about the role of informing people of the available proximal social possibilities, which can motivate to spontaneously engage in new encounters.”³⁵ In this case, the focus is on providing people the ability to invite social interaction or respond to invitations to engage in social interaction. One of the best examples of this type of use of technology to help facilitate collocated social interaction is <https://www.meetup.com/>. Meetup provides a range of different activities and groups people can join that then meet up in the real-world. For example, in the next 24 hours, there is a Swing Dance Cruise, Writer's Group, and Meditation Workshop I could go to just in my local area.

10.1.2.6.4 Encouraging

Lastly, “**encouraging** interaction is about incentivizing or persuading people to start interacting or maintaining ongoing interaction.”³⁶ In the case of encouraging, it's not just about providing opportunities, but also using technology to help nudge people into collocated social interaction. For example, an application could require students in an online class who live near each other to get together to study or work on a course project together. You may notice that the common design approach here is introducing constraints. This means that people are required to meet up and engage in collocated social interaction to accomplish a task because neither can do it on their own. Video games have been using a version of this for years. In many social video games, a single player will not have all of the abilities, skills, weapons, etc. to accomplish a specific goal on their own. They must work with

other players to accomplish a task. The only difference here is that the tasks are being completed in a FtF context instead of a mediated context.

Key Takeaways

- Synchronous communication is communication that happens in real time, whereas asynchronous communication has a time lag between the exchange of messages.
- Nonverbal behaviors are not inherent in many forms of computer-mediated communication. With text-based messages (email, texts, IRC, etc.), there are no nonverbal cues to attend to at all. In other mediated forms (e.g., Skype, Facetime, Zoom), we can see the other person, but it's still not the same as an interaction in a FtF context.
- Netiquette is the set of professional and social rules and norms for acceptable and polite behaviors when interacting with another person(s) through mediating technologies.
- A number of human communication variables have been examined within the CMC context: communication apprehension, communication competence, etc.

Exercises

- Think about the asynchronous and synchronous computer-mediated communication technologies you use regularly. Are nonverbal behaviors filtered in or out? How does this impact your ability to understand the other person?
- Have you ever violated netiquette while interacting with other people? What happened? How did other people react?
- Take a few minutes to Google yourself and see what information is easily available about you on the Internet. You may need to try a couple of variations of your name and even add your hometown if your name is very common. If you find information about yourself, how could a potential employer react to that information? Do you need to clean up your Internet profile? Why?

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Learning Outcomes

1. Explain Erik Erikson's conceptualization of identity.
2. Describe how Erving Goffman's theory can help us explain online identities.
3. Discuss the three types of online identities described by Andrew F. Wood and Matthew J. Smith

In Chapter 3, we discussed the world of intrapersonal communication. At the beginning of Chapter 3 chapter, we had you describe yourself by answering the question, “Who am I?” 20 different times. Look back at that list. Now, think about yourself in the CMC context. Are you the same person in a FtF interaction as you are in a CMC interaction? Maybe, but maybe not. For example, maybe you're a very shy person in FtF interactions, and likewise you have problems talking with complete strangers online. However, maybe you're a very quiet person in FtF interactions, but when you're playing World of Warcraft, you suddenly become very loud and boisterous. One of the beautiful things about CMC for many people is that they can be almost anyone or anything they want to be online. In this section, we're going to examine some specific factors related to one's online self: identity, personality traits, communication traits, privacy, anonymity, and trust.

10.1.3.1 Erik Erikson

Many social psychologists over the years have attempted to define and conceptualize what is meant by the term “identity.” One of the more prominent contributors to this endeavor was Erik Erikson. Erikson believed that an individual's identity was developed through a series of stages of psychosocial development that occur from infancy to adulthood. At each of the different stages, an individual faces various crises that will influence her/his/their identity positively or negatively. Each crisis pits the psychological needs of the individual against the larger needs of society, which is why these crises are psychosocial in nature. You can see these stages, the crises that occur, the basic virtues associated with the crises, and the central question that is asked at each stage in Figure 12.3.1.³⁷

Psychosocial Crisis	Trust vs. Mistrust	Autonomy vs. Shame	Initiative vs. Guilt	Industry vs. Inferiority	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Ego Integrity vs. Despair
Basic Virtue	Hope	Will	Purpose	Competency	Fidelity	Love	Care	Wisdom
Age	0 to 1½	1½ to 3	3 to 5	5 to 12	12 to 18	18 to 40	40 to 65	65+
Key Question	Am I Safe?	Can I do it on my own, or do I need help?	Am I good or bad?	How can I be good?	Who am I, and where am I going?	Am I loved and wanted?	Will I provide something of real value?	Have I lived a full life?

Figure 10.1.3.1: Erikson's Stages of Identity Development

Our question then, is how does technology impact an individual's identity development? To answer this question, we need to understand Erikson's concept of “pseudospeciation,” or the tendency of humans to try to differentiate themselves from other humans.³⁸ Basically, we create in-groups (groups to which we belong) and out-groups (groups to which we do not belong). As Erikson explained, humans have a need “to feel that they are of some special kind (tribe or nation, class or caste, family, occupation, or type), whose insignia they will wear with vanity and conviction, and defend (along with the economic claims they have staked out for their kind) against the foreign, the inimical, the not-so-human kinds.”³⁹ This need to differentiate ourselves from others is especially prominent in those individuals who are under 18 years of age.⁴⁰

Millennials came of age during the influx of new technologies associated with Web 2.0. Subsequent generations have grown up with technology from birth. Ever seen a baby using an iPad? It happens. Erikson died the same year as the first major Web browser, Netscape, came on the market. Obviously, he did not have anything to say about the influx of technology and identity formation

specifically. However, he had seen the invention of other technologies and how they had impacted identity formation, specifically movies:

“interspersed with close-ups of violence and sexual possession and all this without making the slightest demand on intelligence, imagination, or effort. I am pointing here to a widespread imbalance in adolescent experience because I think it explains new kinds of adolescent outbursts and points to new necessities of mastery.”⁴¹

Avi Kay believes that today’s social media and other technologies are even more impactful than movies were in Erikson’s day:

An argument can certainly be made that the immediacy, pervasiveness, and intensity of the ideas and images afforded by the advent of movies pale compared to those of the Internet and social media. As such, reactions to those ideas and images via the Internet can only be expected to provoke even greater passions than those Erikson observed among the youth of his generation.⁴²

Kay specifically discusses how the Internet is being used as a tool to radicalize young people in Islamic countries, and the same is also true of many young people in the United States who are radicalized through the Internet into hate groups here. The Internet is a fantastic tool, but the types of information that it can expose an adolescent to during their formative years can send them on a prosocial or antisocial path. Thankfully, there is hope. As Erikson said, “There is no reason to insist that a technological world, as such, need weaken inner resources of adaptation, which may, in fact, be replenished by the goodwill and ingenuity of a communicating species.”⁴³ Although many forces try to sway adolescents towards anti-social behavior and ideologies, technology isn’t inherently bad for identity formation. Technology can also be used to help forge positive identities.

10.1.3.2 Your Online Identity

We just discussed how an individual’s identity could be shaped by her/his/their interaction with technology, but what about the identity we display when we’re online. In the earliest days of the Internet, it was common for people to be completely anonymous on the Internet (more on this shortly). For our purposes, it’s important to realize that people often present themselves differently in CMC contexts. For example, someone chatting with a complete stranger on Tinder but completely differently when texting with her/his/their mother.

10.1.3.2.1 Erving Goffman and Identity

Erving Goffman, in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, was the first to note that when interacting with others, people tend to guide or control the presentation of themselves to the other person.⁴⁴ As people, we can alter how we look (to a degree), how we behave, and how we communicate, and all of these will impact the perception that someone builds of us during an interaction. And while we’re attempting to create an impression of ourselves, the other person is also attempting to create a perception of who you are as a person.

In an ideal world, we hope how we’re presenting ourselves will be how the other person interprets this self-presentation, but it doesn’t always work out that way. Goffman coined the term dramaturgical analysis to describe this type of interactive sensemaking because he saw the faces people put on when interacting with others as similar to the roles actors play onstage. In this respect, Goffman used the term “front stage” to the types of behavior we exhibit when we know others are watching us (e.g., an interpersonal interaction). “Backstage” then is the behavior we engage in when we have no audience present, so we are free from the rules and norms of interaction that govern our day-to-day interactions with others. Basically, when we are alone, we can let our hair down and relax by getting out of the character we perform on stage. At the same time, we also prepare for future interactions on stage while we’re backstage. For example, maybe a woman will practice a pick up line she plans on using in a bar after work, or a man will rehearse what he’s going to say when he meets his boyfriend’s parents at dinner that night.

Erving Goffman died in 1982 well before the birth of the WWW and the Internet as most of us know it today, so he didn’t write about the issue of online identities. Syed Murtaza Alfarid Hussain applied Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to Facebook.⁴⁵ Alfarid Hussain argues that Facebook can be seen as part of the “front stage” for interaction where we perform our identities. As such, Facebook “provides the opportunity for individuals to use props such as user profile information, photo posting/sharing/tagging, status updates, ‘Like’ and ‘Unlike’ others posts, comments or wall posts, profile image/cover page image, online befriending, group/community membership, weblinks and security and privacy settings.”⁴⁶ If you’re like us, maybe you sat in front of your smartphone, tablet computer, laptop, or desktop computer and wanted to share a meme, but realized that many people you’re friends with on Facebook wouldn’t find the meme humorous, so you didn’t share the meme. When you do this, you

are negotiating your identity on stage. You are determining and influencing how others will view you through the types of posts you make, the shares you make, and even the likes you give to others' posts.

In a study examining identity in blogging and the online 3D multiverse SecondLife, Liam Bullingham and Ana C. Vasconcelos found that most people who blog and those who participated on SecondLife (in their study) "were keen to re-create their offline self online. This was achieved by creating a blogging voice that is true to the offline one, and by publishing personal details about the offline self online, or designing the avatar to resemble the offline self in SL, and in disclosing offline identity in SL."⁴⁷ In "Goffman-speak," people online attempt to mimic their onstage performances across different mediums. Now clearly, not everyone who blogs and hangs out in SecondLife will do this, but the majority of the individuals in Bullingham and Vasconcelos' study did. The authors noted differences between bloggers and SL users. Specifically, SL users have:

more obvious options to deviate from the offline self and adopt personae in terms of the appearance of the 3D avatar. In blogging, it is perhaps expected that persona adoption does not occur, unless a detachment from the offline self is obvious, such as in the case of pseudonymous blogging. Also, the nature of interaction is different, with blogging resembling more closely platform performances and the SL environment offering more opportunities for contacts and encounters.⁴⁸

10.1.3.2.2 Types of Online Identities

Unlike traditional FtF interactions, online interactions can blur identities as people act in ways impossible in FtF interaction. Andrew F. Wood and Matthew J. Smith discussed three different ways that people express their identities online: anonymous, pseudonymous, and real life (Figure 12.3.2).⁴⁹

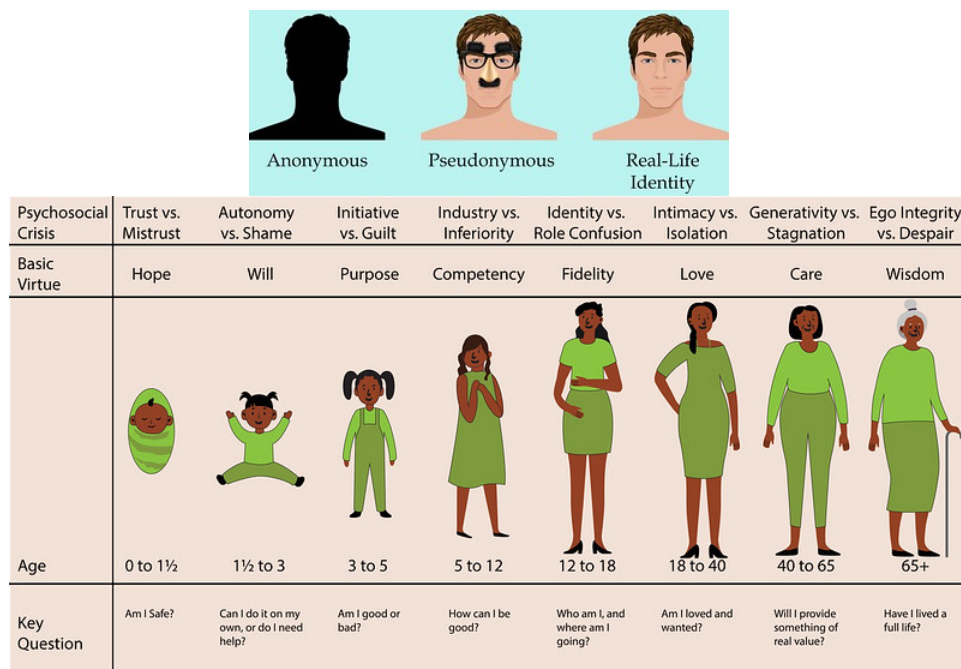


Figure 10.1.3.2: Types of Online Identities

10.1.3.2.2.1 Anonymous Identity

First, people in a CMC context can behave in a way that is completely **anonymous**. In this case, people in CMC interactions can communicate in a manner that conceals their actual identity. Now, it may be possible for some people to figure out who an anonymous person is (e.g., the NSA, the CIA), but if someone wants to maintain her or his anonymity, it's usually possible to do so. Think about how many fake Facebook, Twitter, Tinder, and Grindr accounts exist. Some exist to try to persuade you to go to a website (often for illicit purposes like hacking your computer), while others may be "catfishing" for the fun of it.

Catfishing is a deceptive activity perpetrated by Internet predators when they fabricate online identities on social networking sites to lure unsuspecting victims into an emotional/romantic relationship. In the 2010 documentary *Catfish*, we are introduced to Yaniv "Nev" Schulman, a New York-based photographer, who starts an online relationship with an 8-year-old prodigy named Abby via Facebook. Over the course of nine months, the two exchange more than 1,500 messages, and Abby's family (mother, father, and

sister) also become friends with Nev on Facebook. Throughout the documentary, Nev and his brother Ariel (who is also the documentarian) start noticing inconsistencies in various stories that are being told. Music that was allegedly created by Abby is found to be taken from YouTube. Ariel convinces Nev to continue the relationship knowing that there are inconsistencies and lies just to see how it will all play out. The success of *Catfish* spawned a television show by the same name on MTV.

From this one story, we can easily see the problems that can arise from anonymity on the Internet. Often behavior that would be deemed completely inappropriate in a FtF encounter suddenly becomes appropriate because it's deemed "less real" by some. One of the major problems with online anonymity has been cyberbullying. Teenagers today can post horrible things about one another online without any worry that the messages will be linked back to them directly. Unlike FtF bullying victims who leave the bullying behind when they leave school, teens facing cyberbullying cannot even find peace at home because the Internet follows them everywhere. In 2013 12-year-old Rebecca Ann Sedwick committed suicide after being the perpetual victim of cyberbullying through social media apps on her phone. Some of the messages found on her phone after her suicide included, "Why are you still alive?" and "You haven't killed yourself yet? Go jump off a building." Rebecca suffered this barrage of bullying for over a year and by around 15 different girls in her school. Sadly, Rebecca's tale is one that is all too familiar in today's world. Nine percent of middle-school students reported being victims of cyberbullying, and there is a relationship between victimization and suicidal ideation.⁵⁰

It's also important to understand that cyberbullying isn't just a phenomenon that happens with children. A 2009 survey of Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union members, found that 34% of respondents faced FtF bullying, and 10.7% faced cyberbullying. All of the individuals who were targets of cyberbullying were also bullied FtF.⁵¹

Many people prefer anonymity when interacting with others online, and there can be legitimate reasons to engage in online interactions with others. For example, when one of our authors was coming out as LGBTQIA+, our coauthor regularly talked with people online as they melded the new LGBTQIA+ identity with their Southern and Christian identities. Having the ability to talk anonymously with others allowed our coauthor to gradually come out by forming anonymous relationships with others dealing with the same issues.

10.1.3.2.2 Pseudonymous Identity

The second category of interaction is pseudonymous. Wood and Smith used the term pseudonymous because of the prefix "pseudonym": "**Pseudonym** comes from the Latin words for 'false' and 'name,' and it provides an audience with the ability to attribute statements and actions to a common source [emphasis in original]."⁵² Whereas an anonym allows someone to be completely anonymous, a pseudonym "allows one to contribute to the fashioning of one's own image."⁵³

Using pseudonyms is hardly something new. Famed mystery author Agatha Christi wrote over 66 detective novels, but still published six romance novels using the pseudonym Mary Westmacott. Bestselling science fiction author Michael Crichton (of Jurassic Park fame), wrote under three different pseudonyms (John Lange, Jeffery Hudson, and Michael Douglas) when he was in medical school. Even J. K. Rowling (of Harry Potter fame) used the pseudonym Robert Galbraith to write her follow-up novel to the series, *The Cuckoo's Calling* (2013). Rowling didn't want the media hype or inflated reader expectations while writing her follow-up novel. Unfortunately for Rowling, the secret didn't stay hidden very long.

There are many famous people who use pseudonyms in their social media: @TheTweetOfGod (comedy writer and Daily Show producer, David Javerbaum), @pewdiepie (online personality and producer Felix Arvid Ulf Kjellberg), @baddiewinkle (Octogenarian fashionista and online personality Helen Van Winkle), @doctor.mike (family practitioner and internet celebrity Dr. Mike Varshavski), and more. Some of these people used parts of their real names, and others used fully pseudonymous names. All of them have enormous Internet followings and have used their pseudonyms to build profitable brands. So, why do people use a pseudonym?

The veneer of the Internet allows us to determine how much of an identity we wish to front in online presentations. These images can range from a vague silhouette to a detailed snapshot. Whatever the degree of identity presented, however, it appears that control and empowerment are benefits for users of these communication technologies."⁵⁴

Some people even adopt a pseudonym because their online actions may not be "on-brand" for their day-job or because they don't want to be fully exposed online.

10.1.3.2.2.3 Real Life Identity

Lastly, some people have their real-life identities displayed online. You can find JasonSWrench on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.... Our coauthor made the decision to have his social networking site behavior very public from the beginning. Part of the reason was that when he first joined Facebook in 2007, he was required to use his professional school email address that ended with .edu. In the early days, only people with .edu email addresses could join Facebook. Jason also realizes that this behavior is a part of his professional persona, so he doesn't put anything on one of these sites he wouldn't want other professionals (or even you) to see and read. When it comes to people in the public eye, most of them use some variation of their real names to enhance their brands. That's not to say that many of these same people don't have multiple online accounts, some of which may be completely anonymous or even pseudonymous.

Key Takeaways

- Erikson believed that an individual's identity is developed through a series of stages of psychosocial development that occur from infancy to adulthood. At each stage, we face a different set of crises that pits an individual's psychological needs versus the larger societal needs. Part of this development is impacted by the introduction of new technologies, which can be both good for society and problematic.
- Erving Goffman in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, uses the term "front stage" to describe the types of behavior we exhibit when we know others are watching us (e.g., an interpersonal interaction), and he uses the term "backstage" to refer to behavior we engage in when we have no audience present, so we are free from the rules and norms of interaction that govern our day-to-day interactions with others.
- Andrew F. Wood and Matthew J. Smith discussed three specific types of online identities that people can formulate: anonymous (the person behind a message is completely unknown), pseudonymous (someone uses a pseudonym, but people often know who the real person behind the message is), and real life (when our online and FtF identities are the same).

Exercises

- Of the two theoretical approaches to identity (Erikson and Goffman), which do you think is the better tool for explaining how your online identity and offline identity were formed? Why?
- When it comes to your online CMC behavior, do you have an anonymous, pseudonymous, and real-life identity? How are these similar? How are they different?

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Learning Outcomes

1. Describe uses and gratifications theory and how it helps us understand CMC behavior.
2. Describe social presence theory and how it helps us understand CMC behavior.
3. Describe media richness theory and how it helps us understand CMC behavior.
4. Describe social information processing theory and how it helps us understand CMC behavior.

Most of the early work in computer-mediated communication from a theoretical perspective was conducted using mediated-communication theories that have been developed to discuss the differences between print, radio, and television, and applying them to the Internet. As such, we don't see the proliferation of theories. In this section, we are going to explore four theories and their implications for CMC.

10.1.4.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory

The first major theory used to explain CMC is the uses and gratifications theory. **Uses and gratifications theory** was originally devised in the mid-1970s to explain why people use the types of mass media they do.⁵⁵ The basic premise of the theory is that people choose various media because they get something out of that media, or it makes them happy in some way. From this perspective, people choose various media because they have specific goals that they want to fulfill. Zizi Papacharissi and Alan Rubin were the first scholars to apply the uses and gratifications theory to how people use the Internet.⁵⁶ They found five basic reasons people were using the Internet: interpersonal utility (allows people to interact with others), pass time (helps people kill time), information seeking (people look for specific information they want or need), convenience (it's faster than FtF or even a phone call), and entertainment (people enjoy using the Internet). In this first study, the researchers found that people who used the Internet for interpersonal utility were less satisfied with life and more anxious in FtF communication interactions when compared to those who did not. Please remember that this study was conducted in 2000, so times are quite different now, so the finding from the Papacharissi and Rubin may be different if conducted today.

In a 2008 follow-up study, the picture of Internet socializing was quite different, so it's not surprising that the results were indicative of changes in public consumption.⁵⁷ The researchers found when people try to substitute FtF interpersonal interactions for CMC interactions, they do not find their CMC interactions as rewarding. Conversely, when people supplement their FtF interpersonal interactions with CMC interactions, they are fulfilled by those CMC interactions.

10.1.4.2 Social Presence Theory

The second major theory that has been used to help explain CMC is social presence theory. Social presence theory was created by John Short, Ederyn Williams, and Bruce Christie.⁵⁸ Presence is a psychological state of mind and how we relate to technology. When we are truly present, we forget that we are actually using technology. Presence is "at the heart of humans' desire to use media to move beyond the limits of body and the sensory channels."⁵⁹ Often the term "presence" when used in this context refers to the physical world and how technology mimics the physical world. For example, when you put on a virtual reality helmet, how does your mind and body react? People who experience high levels of presence in a virtual reality simulation will experience real physiological effects. In one study, Dino Krupić, Barbara Žuro, and Philip Corr examined whether a virtual environment could stimulate fear responses in individuals who have a fear of heights.⁶⁰

In this study, individuals wore a virtual helmet and "walked the plank" To measure fear response, participants wore a moodmetric ring which measures electrodermal activity, which is a physiological indication of stress responses. Can VR be used to create physiological stress responses? Yes. We should also mention that the study also examined whether mindfulness practices could help decrease stress responses in VR settings, which it did.

Social presence then is "the degree to which we as individuals perceive another as a real person and any interaction between the two of us as a relationship."⁶¹ Our perceptions of social presence are largely based on the degree to which we have the ability to interpret nonverbal cues from the people we are interacting with.

When it comes to CMC, various technologies will elicit varying degrees of perceptions of presence from people. For example, reading information on a website probably is not going to make you forget that you are reading text on a screen. On the other hand,

if you're engaging in a conversation with your best friend via text messaging, you may forget about the technology and just view the interaction as a common one you have with your friend. In essence, people can vary in how they perceive social presence. One of our coauthors regularly has students in a CMC course spend time in a couple of virtual worlds like SecondLife and World of Warcraft. SecondLife is a virtual world where people can create avatar and interact in a 3D simulated environment. However, it's not a game – it's a 3D virtual world. There is no point system and there is no winning or beating the system. Instead, it's a place for people to socialize and interact. On the other hand, World of Warcraft (WOW) is first and foremost a game. Although there are definitely highly interactive components involved in WOW and people make lifelong friends in WOW, WOW is a virtual world that has a specific end result focused on winning.

These different worlds have different purposes, but people can feel highly present in either or both. When students who are not familiar with these virtual worlds enter them, they often have a hard time understanding how people can spend hours upon hours interacting with others within these virtual worlds. The students view this as a “strange” experience and experience no social presence at all. Conversely, people who “live” in these virtual worlds regularly experience high levels of social presence. We do know that those individuals who report higher levels of social presence tend to have more rewarding online interpersonal interactions and are more likely to perceive themselves as competent communicators within these mediated environments.⁶²

10.1.4.3 Media Richness Theory

The third major theory that has been applied to CMC is media richness theory. Media richness theory was first proposed by Richard L. Daft and Robert H. Lengel.⁶³ **Richness** is defined as “the potential information carrying capacity of data.”⁶⁴ In Lengel's doctoral dissertation, he proposed that media varied in richness depending on how much information is provided through the communication.⁶⁵ For example, in print media, all we have is text. As such, we don't have nonverbal behaviors of the author to help us interpret the words we are reading. With FtF communication, on the other hand, we have the full realm of nonverbal behaviors that we can attend to in an effort to understand the sender's message. As such, Lengel argued that media escalates in richness in the following order: computer output, formal memos, personal memos, telephone conversations, and FtF interactions. You'll notice that this analysis of media was originally designed to help individuals understand the media choices organizational members have in the workplace.

So, where does this leave us with CMC? Well, from the basic premise of media richness theory, we can ascertain that the richer the media, the less ambiguous a message is for a receiver.⁶⁶

10.1.4.4 Social Information Processing Theory

Up to this point, the first three theories we examined that have been used to explain why people use CMC have all been theories originally designed to examine media before the proliferation of CMC. The first truly unique theory designed to look at CMC from a communication perspective came from Joseph Walther's social information processing theory, in 1992.⁶⁷ As someone with a background in communication, Walther realized that our impressions of those we interact with and our interpersonal interactions with them change over time, yet the previous three theories applied to CMC didn't take into account how interpersonal relationships evolve as the interactants spend more time getting to know one another. For example, both media richness theory and social presence theory focus on the nonverbal aspects of CMC and assume that because of the lack of nonverbal cues in CMC, people will inherently find it inherently less rich and/or less present when compared to FtF interactions. Walther argues that the filtering out of nonverbal cues doesn't hinder an individual's ability to form an impression of someone over time in a CMC context. Walther asserts that over time, relationships formed in a CMC context can develop like those that are FtF. He does admit that these relationships will take more time to develop, but the relationships can reach the same end states as relationships formed FtF.

Walther later expanded his ideas of social information processing to include a new concept he dubbed hyperpersonal interactions.⁶⁸ **Hyperpersonal** interactions are those that go above and beyond those possible in traditional FtF interactions. For example, many people who belong to online selfhelp groups discuss feelings and ideas that they would never dream of discussing with people in an FtF interaction unless that person was their therapist. Furthermore, during CMC interactions an individual can refine their message in a manner that is impossible to do during an FtF interaction, which help them present a specific face to an interactant. I'm sure we've all written a text, Facebook post, or email and then decided to delete what we'd just written rather than post or send it because it was not in our best interest to put it out in the world. In CMC interactions, we have this ability to fine-tune our messages before transmitting, whereas in FtF messages, we don't have the ability to sit and ponder our responses writing and rewriting them until we're ready to orally communicate during a FtF interaction. Furthermore, in FtF interactions, there is an expectation that the

interaction keeps moving at a steady pace without the ability to edit one's ideas; whereas, with CMC we can take time to fine-tune our messages in a way that is impossible during an FtF interaction. All of this helps an individual create the public face that they want to be known by.

Key Takeaways

- Uses and gratifications theory helps explain why people use the types of mass media they do. Papacharissi and Rubin found that there were five reasons why people use the Internet: interpersonal utility (allows people to interact with others), pass time (helps people kill time), information seeking (enables people to locate specific information they want or need), convenience (it's faster than FtF or even a phone call), and entertainment (people enjoy using the Internet).
- Social presence theory helps us understand whether or not individuals using CMC technologies perceive the people they are interacting with as "real." Our perceptions of social presence are largely based on the degree to which we can interpret nonverbal cues from the people we are interacting with.
- Media richness theory helps us understand CMC behavior by examining the capacity that a type of media has for transmitting data. As media becomes richer and has more nonverbal content, the easier it is for a receiver to interpret the message accurately, which can, in turn, lead to more successful social interactions online.
- Social information processing (SIP) theory helps researchers understand the development of interpersonal relationships in CMC contexts. SIP argues that overtime relationships formed in a CMC context can develop like those relationships that develop FtF.

Exercises

- Uses and gratifications theory is one of the oldest theories in media, and continues to be one of the most commonly studied. For this exercise, find a research study conducted in the previous five years that examines gratifications theory as related to CMC. Look for the outcomes from that specific study and report them back to your class.
- Compare and contrast social presence theory, media richness theory, and social information processing theory and their explanation of the importance of nonverbal communication in CMC relationships.
- If you've experienced a hyperpersonal relationship online, think about that relationship as you answer the following questions. If you have not had a hyperpersonal relationship online, then talk with someone who has and answer the following questions.
 - How did this hyperpersonal relationship develop?
 - What was different about this relationship when compared to FtF relationships?
 - Do you still have this relationship today? Why or why not?

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This chapter explored many of the ways that modern communication technologies help us interact with each other. Whether we're talking over a headset to someone through our gaming console or texting our roommate, we use these technologies to communicate with people all the time. The first part of this chapter explored the history of computer-mediated communication, which was followed by a discussion of the process of computer-mediated communication. We then discussed identity formation in virtual environments. We ended the chapter by looking at four of the most commonly discussed theories related to computer-mediated communication. Hopefully, you realize that this chapter barely scratches the surface when it comes to how people are using technology to create and enhance their interpersonal relationships.

10.1.5.1 End of Chapter

Key Terms

- Anonymous CMC Identities
- ARPANET
- Asynchronous Communication
- Catfishing
- Co-Present Interactions
- Emoticons
- Hyperpersonal
- Impression Formation
- Message/Bulletin Boards
- Netiquette
- Pseudonymity CMC Identity
- Real-life CMC Identity
- Richness
- Social Presence
- Synchronous Communication
- Uses and Gratifications Theory

10.1.5.2 Real World Case Study

Jenny wasn't meeting any potential boyfriends living in Denver. As a 28-year-old woman, she's found meeting people more and more difficult. She's not really into the bar scene, so meeting people in that environment is pretty much out. One day a friend of hers at work tells her about a new smartphone app called Fndr. The app allows people to see how many people are also looking for dates within a geographic location.

She decides to download the app and see what all of the fuss is about. She creates a profile, uploads a professional picture, and decides to take a chance. Immediately, she sees a screen filled with men all looking for relationships. There is Chad, who is 1.5 miles away. There is Andrew, who is 678 feet from her. Then there was Bobby, who was less than 100 feet from her. *That's very creepy*, Jenny thinks to herself. She looks at Bobby's profile, which shows a picture of a bare-chested male torso. *God, he's ripped!* She looks at another photo that shows his back flexed. That's when she notices his eagle tattoo on the bottom center of his back. *Oh my god! That's Martha's Husband!!!*

1. If you were Jenny, how would you respond to finding someone's husband on a social media site for people looking for relationships?
2. Do you think Jenny should confront Martha's husband through Fndr?
3. Do you think computer-mediated communication has made infidelity in the 21st Century easier?

10.1.5.3 End of Chapter Quiz

1. What is the term for principles for behavior and communication that are appropriate and effective in workplace settings called?
 - a. professionalism
 - b. communication competence

- c. communication intelligence
 - d. etiquette
 - e. formality
2. Rob just received an email from one of his employees. The email is all in lowercase with zero punctuation. Rob only knows when a new sentence is reached when a capital letter rises out of nowhere. Rob's employee has violated what?
- a. CMC norms
 - b. CMC rules
 - c. netiquette
 - d. nonverbal cues
 - e. presence
3. Max writes fan fiction that he publishes on Wattpad under the name M.L. Patterson. He has a pretty large following of readers. He's recently realized that most of his readers assume that he's a female based on the use of his initials instead of his first name. What type of identity does Max's Wattpad presence most represent?
- a. anonymous
 - b. pseudonymous
 - c. real life
 - d. non-identifiable
 - e. identifiable
4. Dae-Jae is a computer designer in Korea. He works in the training department of a large multinational automobile company. He's been tasked with creating a new virtual training program for salespeople around the world. One of his biggest concerns is ensuring that the game he designs for this training is able to immerse people in as a realistic an environment as possible. Dae-Jae really wants learners to feel like they are interacting with a real customer. Which theory of mediated communication best describes what Dae-Jae is concerned with?
- a. media richness theory
 - b. social presence theory
 - c. medium is the message
 - d. social information processing theory
 - e. uses and gratifications theory
5. Alima is hanging out with her best friend at a local diner. She's chit-chatting with her best friend, but both of them are also constantly texting other people. What type of interaction does this example most clearly illustrate?
- a. co-present
 - b. dual-processing
 - c. effective
 - d. communicatively competent
 - e. rewarding

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10.1.5.5 End of Chapter Quiz Answer Key

1. A
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. A



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