

JOSEPH TUROW

MEDIA TODAY

MASS COMMUNICATION IN
A CONVERGING WORLD



SEVENTH EDITION



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— 7TH EDITION —



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— 7TH EDITION —

JOSEPH TUROW

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For Oriana Avra, Felix David, and Mia Ariel

About the Author



Joseph Turow is Robert Lewis Shayon Professor of Communication at the Annenberg School for Communication. Before joining Penn's faculty, he taught at Purdue University. Turow is an elected Fellow of the International Communication Association and was presented with a Distinguished Scholar Award by the National Communication Association. A 2005 *New York Times Magazine* article referred to Turow as "probably the reigning academic expert on media fragmentation." In 2010 *The New York Times* called him "the ranking wise man on some thorny new-media and marketing topics." In 2012 the TRUSTe internet privacy-management organization designated him a "privacy pioneer" for his research and writing on marketing and digital privacy.

Turow received his PhD in Communication from the University of Pennsylvania. He has authored eleven books, edited five, and written more than 150 articles on mass media industries. Apart from *Media Today*, his most recent books are *The Aisles Have Eyes: How Retailers Track Your Shopping, Strip Your Privacy, and Define Your Power* (Yale, 2017) and *The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry Is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth* (Yale, 2011; Turkish edition, 2015). In 2010 the University of Michigan Press published *Playing Doctor: Television, Storytelling, and Medical Power*, a history of prime-time TV and the sociopolitics of medicine, and in 2013 it won the McGovern Health Communication Award from the University of Texas College of Communication. Other books reflecting current interests are *Niche Envy: Marketing Discrimination in the Digital Age* (MIT Press, 2006), *Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World* (University of Chicago Press, 1997; paperback, 1999; Chinese edition 2004); and *The Hyperlinked Society: Questioning Connections in the Digital Age* (edited with Lokman Tsui, University of Michigan Press, 2008).

Turow's continuing national surveys of the American public on issues relating to marketing, new media, and society have received a great deal of attention in the popular press, as well as in the research community. He has been interviewed widely about his research, including by NPR's *Fresh Air with Terry Gross*, *The Atlantic*, the

BBC, CBS News, and elsewhere. He has also written about media and advertising for the popular press, including *The New York Times*, *The Atlantic*, *American Demographics* magazine, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Los Angeles Times*. His research has received financial support from the Digital Trust Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Kaiser Family Foundation, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Federal Communications Commission, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, among others.

Turow was awarded a Lady Astor Lectureship by Oxford University. He has received several conference paper and book awards and has lectured widely. He was invited to give the McGovern Lecture at the University of Texas College of Communication, the Pockrass Distinguished Lecture at Penn State University, the Chancellor's Distinguished Lecture at Louisiana State University, and the Melvin DeFleur Lecture at Boston University. He currently serves on the editorial boards of the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *The International Journal of Communication*, and *Media Industries*.



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Preface

Our Approach to Studying Media Today

Welcome to *Media Today: Mass Communication in a Converging World!* As the subtitle suggests, this seventh edition of *Media Today* uses convergence as a lens that puts the reader at the center of the profound changes in the 21st-century media world. Through the convergence lens, readers learn to think critically about the role of media today and about what these changes mean for their lives presently and in the future. The book's media systems approach helps readers look carefully at how media are created, distributed, and exhibited in the new world that the digital revolution has created. In this way, *Media Today* goes beyond the traditional mass communication textbook's focus on consuming media to give students an insider's perspective on how media businesses operate. How exactly does Google profit from web searches? What will the magazine look like in five years?

Joseph Turow—who has been teaching Intro to media for well over a decade—demonstrates the many ways that media convergence and the pervasiveness of the internet have blurred distinctions between and among various media. After looking at the essential history of each media industry, Turow examines the current forces shaping that industry and explores the impact of emerging trends. From newspapers, to video games, to social networking, to mobile platforms, Turow's *Media Today* prepares students to live in the digital world of media, helping them to become critical, media-literate consumers of mass media and, if they go on to work in mass media industries, more alert, sensitive practitioners.

Media Today, Seventh Edition, is characterized by its focus on the following:

- Convergence
- Consumer education
- Comprehensive media industry coverage
- Contemporary student-friendly examples

Convergence

Today it is impossible to write about the workings of the newspaper, television, magazine, recording, movie, video game, advertising, and public relations industries without considering fundamental changes being wrought by websites, blogs, email, video and audio files, social media, and multimedia streams. Consequently, readers will find that every chapter incorporates digital media developments into the main flow of the material.

Consumer Education

The overarching goal of the seventh edition of *Media Today* is to help students become media-literate members of society. Being media-literate involves applying critical thinking skills to the mass media. It also involves reasoning clearly about controversies that may involve the websites students use, the mobile devices they carry, the television shows they watch, the music they hear, the magazines they read, and much more. It means becoming a more aware and responsible citizen—voter, worker, adult—in our media-driven society.

After reading *Media Today*, students should be

- savvy about the influences that guide media organizations,
- up-to-date on political issues relating to the media,
- sensitive to the ethical dimensions of media activities, and
- knowledgeable about scholarship regarding media effects.

Comprehensive Media Industry Coverage

What distinguishes mass communication from other forms of communication is the industrialized—or mass production—process that is involved in creating and circulating the material. It is this industrial process that generates the potential for reaching millions (and even billions) of diverse anonymous people at roughly the same time. *Media Today* uses this production-based approach to scrutinize the media in order to show students how the industrial nature of the process is central to the definition of mass communication.

Media Today also introduces the media as an interconnected system of industries—not as industries totally separate from one another. Of course, an introductory text cannot begin with a sophisticated exploration of boundary blurring. Students have to first understand the nature of the mass communication process. They must become aware that taking a mass communication perspective on the world means learning to see the interconnected system of media products that surrounds them every day in new ways.

Contemporary Student-Friendly Examples

As much as possible, the textbook incorporates stories and events that are happening *now*. In the text, readers will find a wide variety of pop culture examples taken from across different industries—from music, to TV, to video games.

How to Use This Book

Unlike other texts for the introductory course, *Media Today* takes a media systems approach out of the conviction that the best way to engage students is to reveal the forces that guide the creation, distribution, and exhibition of news, information, entertainment, education, and advertising within media systems. Once students begin to understand the ways these systems operate, they will be able to interact with the media around them in new ways.

Many features have been built into the text not only to help students learn about the inner workings of key industries in mass communication but also to help them engage with this media, deepening their understanding of their own roles as both consumers and producers of media.

Chapter Opening Pedagogy

Chapter Objectives

Students are provided with the key learning objectives for the chapter at the very beginning so that they know what is ahead of them.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss what mass media convergence means and why it is important.
- 2 Explain the differences between interpersonal communication and mass communication.
- 3 Explain why an unorthodox definition of mass communication makes the term especially relevant in today's media environment.
- 4 Explain the meaning and importance of culture's relationship with the mass media.
- 5 Analyze the ways in which the mass media affect our everyday lives.
- 6 Explain what the term "media literacy" means.
- 7 List the key principles involved in becoming media-literate.

Vignettes

Relevant and current stories about events or trends in the world of mass communication connect students with what they will read in the chapter and how the information applies to the world in which they live.

Are you like the "typical" American when it comes to being connected to the internet? According to the Pew Research Center, half of American households have five devices capable of connecting to the internet—for example, a smartphone; desktop computer; laptop; tablet; or streaming device such as a Roku, Xbox, or Apple TV.¹ Pew adds that nearly one in five US households are "hyper-connected"—that is, they contain ten or more of these internet-capable devices. As a result, to quote an Experian report, "throughout the day we are consuming content wherever and whenever we like."² In fact, US smartphone users are watching a growing amount of video on their smartphones. That's particularly the case with people between 18 and 24 years old. In 2017 the Nielsen research firm found they viewed an

"Whoever controls the media controls the culture."

ALLEN GINSBERG, POET

"Information is the oxygen of the modern age."

RONALD REAGAN, U.S. PRESIDENT



Quotes for Consideration

Compelling quotes from media figures draw attention to key ideas and spark discussion.

Timelines

Timelines in all the industry chapters help students visually organize the relevant historical information that has shaped that particular industry. Students can go to the book's Companion Website to explore the historical events and figures in more depth using our interactive timeline feature, which links to further resources such as newspaper clippings, photos, video clips, and more.

1930s	1940s	1950s	1960s	1970s
<p>1931: Emanuel Goldberg and Robert Luther in Germany receive a US patent for a "Statistical Machine," an early document search engine that uses photoelectric cells and pattern recognition to search for specific words on microfilm documents.</p>	<p>1945: Scientist Vannevar Bush publishes the article "As We May Think" in <i>The Atlantic</i> magazine predicting the invention of technology that would allow ideas in different parts of text to link to one another.</p> <p>1946: University of Pennsylvania engineers create ENIAC, the Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer.</p>	<p>1958: President Eisenhower requests funds to create the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA).</p>	<p>1962: Len Kleinrock writes an MIT dissertation on "packet switching."</p> <p>1965: Larry Roberts at MIT sets up an experiment in which two computers communicate to each other using packet-switching technology.</p> <p>1966: ARPANET project begins in Cambridge, Massachusetts; Larry Roberts is in charge.</p> <p>1969: ARPANET connects computers at four US universities. The first ARPANET message is sent between UCLA and Stanford University.</p>	<p>1971: Ray Tomlinson creates the first email program, along with the @ sign to signify "at."</p> <p>1973: ARPANET establishes connections to two universities in the UK and Norway.</p> <p>1976: Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak found Apple computers.</p>



GLOBAL MEDIA TODAY & CULTURE

A CASE STUDY OF CONVERGENCE: SONY CORPORATION

What do you think of when you hear the word Sony? A video game console? A record company? A Hollywood studio? A series of consumer electronics devices, such as television sets, cameras, headphones, smart mobile devices, Blu-ray, and DVD players? The fact is, it is all of the above and more. The Japanese conglomerate Sony purchased the US record company CBS Record Group in 1988 and the Hollywood studio Columbia Pictures in 1989, and since then it has been consolidating its presence in the global media content business in addition to its core activities centered on consumer electronics. The apparent goal of these acquisitions was to leverage media content and digital devices, reuniting under the same ownership the hardware (electronics) and the software (entertainment) in different media sectors.



In hindsight we can observe that with this strategy they anticipated and embraced the unfolding digital revolution. This strategic move led to synergies among the different businesses they operate in, made possible precisely by the convergence of these different sectors, generated by their digital development and evolution. It can be considered one large example of convergence within one conglomerate operating in the global media landscape, combining previously separate industries now reunited in the same digital environment. What do you think? Can legacy media companies thrive or even survive without embracing convergence and the digital change? How can they embrace convergence and digital change? What are the consequences of convergence for the consumers?

Global Media Today & Culture Boxes

Global Media Today & Culture boxes provide stories about current trends in media around the world and help students appreciate the media's global impact. Discussion questions encourage students to think about how different cultural perceptions or experiences may inform the way media are experienced around the world.

New Media Literacy Questions

Throughout the chapters, students will find media literacy questions that ask them to reflect on what it means to be a consumer of mass media and how that affects their lives.

from other forms of communication is not the size of the audience—it can be large or small. Rather, what makes mass communication special is the way the content of the communication message is created.

THINKING ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY

Mass communication is integral to how our society functions. In what ways does mass communication and the ways it is produced and distributed contribute to society?

mass production process the industrial process that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time

Mass communication is carried out by organizations working together in industries to produce and circulate a wide range of content—from entertainment to news to educational materials. It is this industrial **mass production process** that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time. And it is the **industrial nature** of the process—for exam-

Key Terms

Key terms and their definitions have been placed where students need them most—next to their usage in the text. Students can practice their mastery of these terms by using the flash card feature on the Companion Website.

mass production process
the industrial process that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time

industrial nature
the aspect of industrialized—or mass production—processes involved in creating the material that distinguishes mass communication from other forms of communication. This industrial process creates the potential for reaching billions of diverse, anonymous people simultaneously

Mass communication is carried out by organizations working together in industries to produce and circulate a wide range of content—from entertainment to news to educational materials. It is this industrial **mass production process** that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time. And it is the **industrial nature** of the process—for example, the various companies that work together within the television or internet industries—that makes mass communication different from other forms of communication even when the audience is relatively small and even one-to-one. To help you understand how mass communication relates to other forms of communication, let's take a closer look.

The Elements of Communication

Communication is a basic feature of human life. In general, the word “**communication**” refers to people interacting in ways that at least one of the parties involved

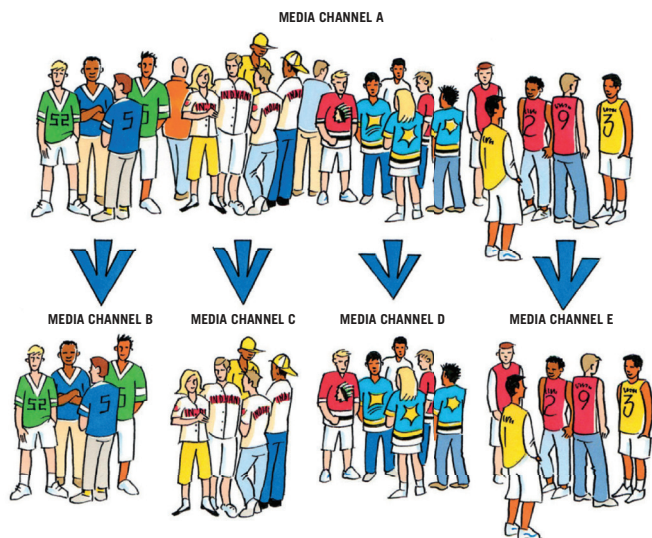


Figure 1.1

The arrival of the diverse array of media channels has had a fragmenting effect on audiences—as audience members move to watch, read, or listen to a new channel, fewer people use any single channel.

Infographics

Vibrant and instructive art provides students with a visual study tool for understanding key concepts in the text.



Activity

The section “How to Make Sense of Discussions and Arguments About Media Effects” lists questions to ask yourself. Read this excerpt from an NBC News report about a study of preschoolers’ exposure to fast-paced television programming (NBC News, September 12, 2011, www.nbcnews.com/id/44460161/ns/health-childrens_health/t/pants-wearing-sponge-blamed-kids-poor-attention-spans/#.VRXAzvnF98E).

Answer these questions about the research:

- 1 What question is the researcher asking? Is it interesting and important?
- 2 In what research tradition does the study fall?
- 3 How good is the research design?
- 4 Are the research subjects appropriate, and are there a sufficient number?
- 5 How convincing is their analysis?

University of Virginia researchers recruited sixty mostly white and middle- or upper-middle-class 4-year-olds and randomly divided them into three groups. One group watched a nine-minute clip of *SpongeBob SquarePants*; a second watched a nine-minute clip of *Caillou*, a realistic PBS cartoon about a preschool boy; and the third drew pictures for nine minutes instead of watching television.

Immediately afterward, the researchers tested what psychologists call “executive function” in the children. “What executive function basically measures is your ability to stay on task, to not be distracted and to persist on task,” Christakis explains.

Turns out the PBS and picture-drawing groups performed equally well on the tests; the *SpongeBob* group scored significantly worse. Watching a full half-hour fast-paced cartoon show could be even more detrimental, the study authors write.



Key Terms

You can find the definitions to these key terms in the marginal glossary throughout this chapter. Test your knowledge of these terms with interactive flash cards on the *Media Today* Companion Website.

active audience	digital divide	polysemous
agenda setting	knowledge gap	priming
capitalism	magic bullet or hypodermic	propaganda
colonialism	needle approach	propaganda analysis
co-optation	mainstream approaches	social relations
critical theory	mass media research	two-step flow model
cultivation studies	naturalistic experiment	uses and gratifications
cultural colonialism	panel survey	research
cultural studies	political economy	



Questions for Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. If the early researchers who concluded media had a “magic bullet” effect on audience were doing research today, how might they use social media to support their theory? What evidence would they see in how people engage with social media that would counter the “magic bullet” theory?
2. In Chapter 1 there was a discussion of the use of media to satisfy “basic human needs” such as enjoyment, companionship, and surveillance. Discuss how the satisfaction of these needs would factor into research applying the “uses and gratifications” framework.
3. The “mean world” syndrome posits that media create the sense that the world is a more dangerous place than it really is. Think of examples of media that have created this sense of a “mean world” in yourself and how you could counter that message.
4. How might you think the impact of video games could be considered using “cultivation theory”?

End-of-Chapter Materials

Activities

Students are given issues to explore and report on based on a debate or topic that was covered earlier in the chapter

Review Questions

End-of-chapter review questions give students the opportunity to recall topics discussed in the chapter and to test their conceptual understanding of these topics.

Expanded in This Edition

- Increases its coverage on how convergence is expanding as digital media take on greater roles in old and new media industries.
- Reinforces its focus on the social implications of many of the new digital-media developments, including for industries, organizations, workers and various segments of the population.
- Enlarges its emphasis on the unstable nature of traditional terms such as magazine, television, radio, book, and movie in an era of digital convergence, thereby encouraging students to think about how the meanings and uses of these terms are changing.

Companion Website

A freshly updated website provides students and instructors with all the tools they will need in their mass communication course: www.routledge.com/cw/turow.

For Students

The student website features content-rich assets to help students expand their knowledge, study for exams, and more. Features include the following:

- *Practice quizzes for each chapter*: help students test their knowledge and prepare for exams.
- *Interactive key-term flash cards*: provide students with a fun way to review important terms and definitions.
- *Interactive industry timeline*: brings the timelines from the chapters to life and allows students to learn more about the important people and events that have shaped the media business.
- *Chapter recaps*: summarize the key points and themes of each chapter.
- *Media Today internship and career guide*: offers students information and links to job listings to help them get started in a career in media.
- *Links to further resources*: direct students to key media websites for further study and the latest news on media industries.
- *Media Literacy Questions*: ask students to further reflect on the nature of mass media and its impact in their lives.

For Instructors

The password-protected instructor website provides completely updated instructor support materials in the form of the following:

- *Complete, online, and downloadable instructor's manual revised for this update*: this manual summarizes the key learning objectives of each chapter and provides instructors with discussion starters to help build a dialogue in the classroom.
- *Extensive expanded test bank*: provides multiple-choice, true–false, and fill-in-the-blank questions, as well as new short-answer questions for exams for each chapter.
- *Fully revised PowerPoint presentations*: offer lecture outlines for each chapter, along with a set of slides for every figure in the text.
- *Sample syllabi*: help instructors plan their courses using the new edition.
- *Textboxes* from previous editions of *Media Today* for instructors who would like to continue to incorporate them into their classes.
- *Links to all videos from the Interactive Timelines*, plus additional video recommendations.

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To the Student

I hope that you will find *Media Today* fun to read, helpful for understanding the media-saturated world around you, and (if you're so inclined) useful for thinking about a future career in mass media. More likely than not, you've grown up with all or at least most of the media we cover in this book. Your family has probably had newspapers, books, magazines, CDs, radios, and a television set in your home from the time you were born. It's likely, too, that you have had a computer and the internet in your home from the time you were small. In one sense, then, you're already an "expert" at mass media: you've seen a lot of it, you know what you like, and you know what you don't like. At the same time, there's probably a lot about the content mass media present, the industries behind them, and their roles in society that you haven't considered yet.

The purpose of *Media Today* is to introduce you to these ideas, with the expectation that they will help you think about the media you think you already know in entirely new ways. To get the most out of this text, use all the bells and whistles that come with it. The chapter objectives, the marginal glossary, the timelines, the art and photo selections, and the boxed features all have been created with an eye toward making the text itself as clear and relevant as possible. The Companion Website (www.routledge.com/cw/turow) will also be of enormous value for learning more about book topics, studying for exams, learning about careers in mass media, quizzing yourself, and more. Get to know all these learning aids, and let us know what you think of them.

Best wishes,

Joe Turow

MEDIA TODAY



1

Understanding Mass Media, Convergence, and the Importance of Media Literacy

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- 1 Discuss what mass media convergence means and why it is important.
- 2 Explain the differences between interpersonal communication and mass communication.
- 3 Explain why an unorthodox definition of mass communication makes the term especially relevant in today's media environment.
- 4 Explain the meaning and importance of culture's relationship with the mass media.
- 5 Analyze the ways in which the mass media affect our everyday lives.
- 6 Explain what the term "media literacy" means.
- 7 List the key principles involved in becoming media-literate.

Are you like the “typical” American when it comes to being connected to the internet? According to the Pew Research Center, half of American households have five devices capable of connecting to the internet—for example, a smartphone; desktop computer; laptop; tablet; or streaming device such as a Roku, Xbox, or Apple TV.¹ Pew adds that nearly one in five US households are “hyper-connected”—that is, they contain ten or more of these internet-capable devices. As a result, to quote an Experian report, “throughout the day we are consuming content wherever and whenever we like.”² In fact, US smartphone users are watching a growing amount of video on their smartphones. That’s particularly the case with people between 18 and 24 years old. In 2017 Nielsen found they viewed an average of 83 minutes daily on those small screens.³

Not only are more and more people consuming content on different devices, they are reading, listening, and viewing the same content on different devices. It’s quite possible today to start reading an article in a physical magazine—say *Vogue* or *Car and Driver*—and finish reading that article on the magazine’s website or app. You might well have started reading a book on your Amazon Kindle during lunch, switched over to reading some of it on your phone’s Kindle app on a bus home, and then then picked up where you left off by listening to an Audible continuation on your Echo speaker (Audible and Echo are Amazon-owned) before going to bed. Or how about TV: If you subscribe to cable or satellite television, you probably know that the companies give you the possibility to view a variety of channels live or even on demand just about anywhere through various devices—your TV set, your desktop computer, your laptop, your tablet, your smartphone, your Xbox video game console, your Apple TV, and more. Some companies call this approach “television everywhere.” If you don’t subscribe to cable or satellite services, you probably know how to cobble together your own version of television everywhere. You can go to several vendors who will let you view many of the same programs via many of the same technologies.

To people involved in media businesses, these changes are exciting and scary at the same time. Many executives realize they are moving into a world that is like no other in history. They increasingly see a world of not just television everywhere but also newspapers everywhere,

“Whoever controls the media controls the culture.”

ALLEN GINSBERG, POET

“Information is the oxygen of the modern age.”

RONALD REAGAN, U.S. PRESIDENT

books everywhere, magazines everywhere, movies everywhere, and more. Many firms are jockeying to shape the new world and define themselves in it. At the same time, they understand that the developments represent only the beginning of what will certainly be a decades-long transformation of the media system in the United States—and the rest of the world. The changes will surely affect you as a citizen, as a consumer, and as a worker, especially if you choose to work in one of the media industries. It’s important, then, to ask and answer some basic questions:

- Precisely what is happening that is so transformative?
- Why are those things happening?
- How will it affect me as a citizen, a consumer, and a worker?
- What can I do to help myself, my family, and my society as the changes unfold?

Media Today is about helping you answer these questions. Over the next several chapters we will take an excursion through industries and businesses that relate directly to our everyday lives. We will look at how the media industries got there, what they are doing, and where they seem to be going. We’ll explore what is changing about them and what is not. And we’ll develop a way of thinking about them that will help you analyze them long after you’ve read this book. This chapter begins the journey with an exploration of an idea that is at the core of the “everywhere” activities we have just described: media convergence.

Introducing Media Convergence

Let’s take the words one at a time. *Media* are platforms or vehicles that industries have developed for the purpose of creating and circulating messages. Think of phones, television sets, movies, music recordings, magazines, and newspapers. *Convergence* occurs when two or more things come together. *Media convergence* takes place when products

typically linked to one medium show up on many media. When you can get a Red Sox baseball game broadcast in Boston to show up on your laptop computer and/or your Android phone in Seattle, that is convergence. When you can transfer an Adele music album from your laptop to your iPod, iPhone, iPad, or Xbox, that is convergence.

Until recently, media convergence was not a common activity. To the contrary, people associated every medium with a particular kind of product. The telephone meant conversations via a special device between two people not located in the same place. Television meant audiovisual programs on a special set with a glass front. Movies meant audiovisual programs made for projection onto a big screen. Newspapers meant printed stories on large sheets of paper circulated daily or weekly. Music recordings were plastic discs or tape cartridges made to be played on phonographs or tape decks.

It's not as if the media were sealed off from one another. Musical recordings showed up on radio all the time. Movie plots sometimes came from books, and theatrical films did show up on television. But these activities involved negotiation by companies that saw themselves in different industries. (The industries that guided particular media and their products were worlds unto themselves.) Moreover, actually moving the products from one medium to another could take a lot of work. One important reason was that the technology—that is, the machinery and materials—of the media industries were very different from one another. Certainly, most members of the audience didn't have the equipment to carry out such transfers. And it was hard to imagine a print magazine such as *Cosmopolitan* sharing a screen with the ABC television program *The Good Doctor*.

"Wait!" you might be yelling at this page (or more likely saying to yourself), "That's still the case. When I hold *Cosmo* or *The Economist* in my hand, I can't put it into my TV set." You're right. But as the phrase "television everywhere" indicates, executives in industries that have historically thought of their content as specific to a particular medium are now trying to get their products—the content you read, watch, and hear—in front of their intended audiences wherever they are. If you're a loyal reader of *Cosmo* or *The Economist* or most any major magazine, you probably know it has a website. It probably has a Facebook page, Twitter feed, and an application ("app") for people to access it on a smartphone, an iPad, or another tablet.

But we're not talking here only of the merger of magazines and the web. Media convergence is taking place with so many media that it is quickly becoming the way media executives do their work, no matter what their industry is. If you're into college sports, you probably have heard about March Madness, the basketball tournament that pits college teams against one another toward finding a National College Athletic Association (NCAA) champion. Until just a few years ago, the only place you could see the matchups outside the stadiums was on your television set, with the CBS television network and Turner's TNT cable network showing various games. But convergence has changed everything. Take what went on during March 2018 as an example. All games except the two "Final Four" national semifinals and the national championship game showed up in their entirety on Turner pay networks TBS, TruTV, and TNT, as well as CBS. (TBS televised the Final Four and CBS aired the championship game.) Viewers with cable or satellite subscriptions could stream the Turner networks on various devices. CBS offered streaming through its subscription service "CBS All Access" (for which nonsubscribers could get a free trial to view the games) on the web, on mobile phones,

and on tablets. In addition, the NCAA itself offered a streaming service for a fee through which fans could view all the games on various devices. Truly television everywhere.

Why is media convergence happening now? Why do companies carry it out? When do they do it? How do they do it? When are companies—and workers and industries—winners because of convergence, and when are they losers? How are individuals and society at large affected by the new developments in media today? How might they be affected in the future? Are there government policies or other organized initiatives that try to ensure the best possible outcomes for all involved with the media system?

You probably realize that these questions cannot be answered in two or three paragraphs. Answering them is a project for this book as a whole. The goal is to help you answer these questions not just right now but also in the future as you move through your personal and professional life. To start, it's useful to step back and ask what the media we will be exploring have in common. The answer is that they are all involved in the process of mass communication. Media convergence is, in fact, a central aspect of mass communication today. This chapter will unpack what that means. We will explore and define communication, media, and culture, and we will consider how the relationships among them affect us and the world in which we live. We will also consider why the term “mass communication” remains relevant in the 21st century, contrary to what some writers say.

Introducing Mass Communication

To understand why some writers suggest that the idea of mass communication doesn't connect to what's going on in today's world, we have to look at how the term has traditionally been used. Over the past hundred years, people who wrote about mass communication tended to relate it to the size of the audience. That made a lot of sense at one point. From the mid-19th century onward, new technologies such as high-speed newspaper presses, radio, movies, and television provided access to the huge “masses” of people. Not only were those audiences very large; they also were dispersed geographically, were quite diverse (i.e., made up of different types of people), and typically were anonymous to the companies that created the material. The essential reason that newspapers, radio, television, and other such media were considered different from other means of communication had to do with the size and composition of the audience.

This perspective on mass communication worked well until recently, when the key aspects of the traditional definition of mass communication as reaching huge, diverse groups no longer fit. The reason is that the arrival of many channels—including the growing number of radio and TV stations, the rise of video recorders, the multiplication of cable networks, and the rise of the web—led to **audience fragmentation** (see Figure 1.1). That is, as people watched or read these new channels, there were fewer people using any one of them. Because these new media channels do not necessarily individually reach large numbers of people—the “masses”—some writers have suggested that we can abandon the term mass communication.

However, the view in this book is that mass communication is still a critically important part of society. As we will see, what really separates mass communication

audience fragmentation

the process of dividing audience members into segments based on background and lifestyle in order to send them messages targeted to their specific characteristics

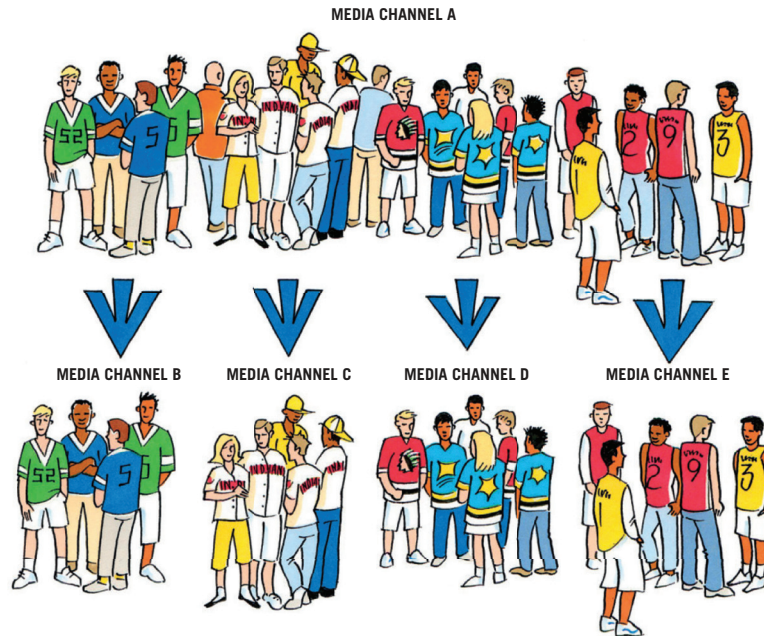


Figure 1.1

The arrival of the diverse array of media channels has had a fragmenting effect on audiences—as audience members move to watch, read, or listen to a new channel, fewer people use any single channel.

from other forms of communication is not the size of the audience—it can be large or small. Rather, what makes mass communication special is the way the content of the communication message is created.

THINKING ABOUT MEDIA LITERACY

Mass communication is integral to how our society functions. In what ways does mass communication and the ways it is produced and distributed contribute to society?

mass production process

the industrial process that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time

industrial nature

the aspect of industrialized—or mass production—processes involved in creating the material that distinguishes mass communication from other forms of communication. This industrial process creates the potential for reaching billions of diverse, anonymous people simultaneously

Mass communication is carried out by organizations working together in industries to produce and circulate a wide range of content—from entertainment to news to educational materials. It is this industrial **mass production process** that creates the potential for reaching millions, even billions, of diverse, anonymous people at around the same time. And it is the **industrial nature** of the process—for example, the various companies that work together within the television or internet industries—that makes mass communication different from other forms of communication even when the audience is relatively small and even one-to-one. To help you understand how mass communication relates to other forms of communication, let's take a closer look.

The Elements of Communication

Communication is a basic feature of human life. In general, the word “**communication**” refers to people interacting in ways that at least one of the parties involved

understands as **messages**—collections of symbols (words, signs) that appear purposefully organized (meaningful) to those sending or receiving them.

When you signal your needs or thoughts to others, the signals you send are both verbal and nonverbal. When Jane shouts excitedly to her friend Jack and leaps with joy into his arms after she wins a tennis match, that's a form of communication. It's likely that Jack, whose arms she almost breaks, realizes that she wants to tell him something. People who study communication would typically call the interaction just described **interpersonal communication**, a form that involves two or three individuals signaling to each other using their voices, facial and hand gestures, and other signs (even clothes) to convey meaning. When you talk to your parents about your coursework, discuss a recent movie over dinner with friends, or converse with your professor during her office hours, you are participating in the interpersonal form of communication.

Mediated interpersonal communication can be described as interpersonal communication that is assisted by a **medium**—part of a technical system that helps in the transmission, distribution, or reception of messages. The medium helps communication take place when senders and receivers are not face-to-face. The internet is an example of a medium, as are radio, CD, television, and DVD. (Note that the term “medium” is singular; it refers to one technological vehicle for communication. The plural is media.) When you write a thank-you note to your grandmother, send an email to your graduate teaching assistant, or call a friend on the phone, you are participating in the mediated form of interpersonal communication.

Although interpersonal, mediated interpersonal, and mass communication have their differences, they have a central similarity: they involve messages. Eight major elements are involved in every interaction that involves messages: the source, encoding, transmitter, channel, receiver, decoding, feedback, and noise.

Take a look at Figure 1.2. It illustrates how these eight elements appear in the process of interpersonal communication in an imaginary conversation between TV personality Trevor Noah and a student named Sally. Now take a look at Table 1.1. It lays out the ways these elements are similar or different across interpersonal

communication

refers to people interacting in ways that at least one of the parties involved understands as messages

messages

collections of symbols (words, signs) that appear purposefully organized (meaningful) to those sending or receiving them

interpersonal communication

a form of communication that involves two or three individuals signaling to each other using their voices, facial and hand gestures, and other signs (even clothes) to convey meaning

mediated interpersonal communication

a specialized type of interpersonal communication that is assisted by a device, such as a pen or pencil, computer, or phone

medium

part of a technical system that helps in the transmission, distribution, or reception of messages



A common sight today is interpersonal communication through both direct and mediated means. Mediated interpersonal communication methods such as FaceTime allow people to keep in touch in a more visual way and across greater distances than was ever possible in the past.

communication, mediated interpersonal communication, and mass communication. The table also presents examples that highlight these similarities and differences.

The main difference between mass communication and the two forms of interpersonal communication relates to the nature of the source and the receiver. In the interpersonal modes, the source and the receiver are individual people—Trevor Noah schmoozing face-to-face with Sally in the library, for example, or Trevor gossiping over the phone with another student named Geraldo. In the case of mass communication, the source is an organization—for example, the Comedy Central television channel (where you can view Trevor Noah’s show) or the *Guardian* newspaper. When you read a particular newspaper article or watch a particular program, you may think that sources are individual people, not organizations. After all, the name of the author

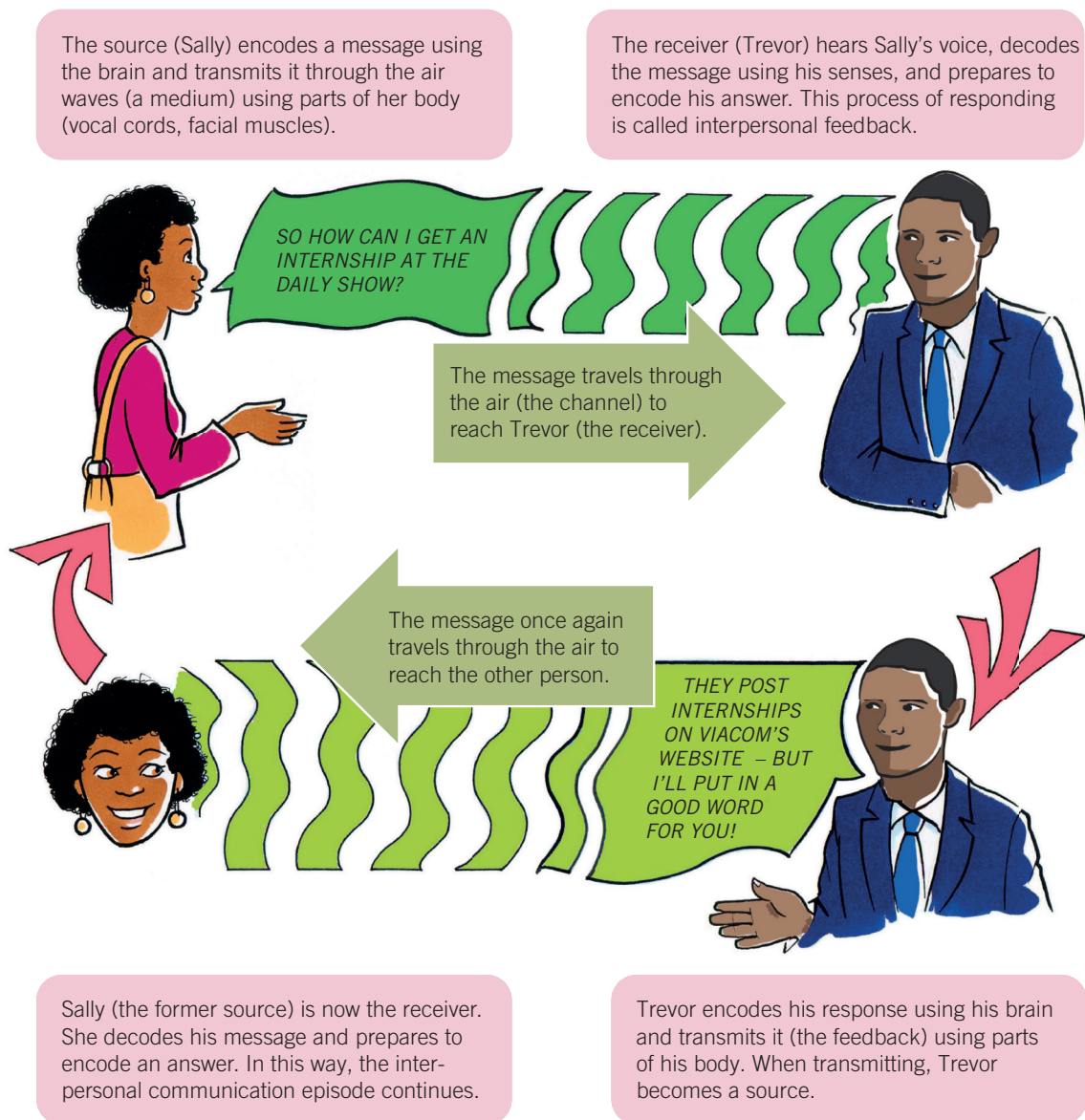


Figure 1.2

In this model of interpersonal communication, information moves from a starting point at the source (Sally), who transmits the message over the channel to the receiver (Trevor) for decoding.

Table 1.1 Comparing Elements Across Different Forms of Communication

Element of communication	General meaning of the element	How do we understand that element in interpersonal communication?	How do we understand that element in mediated interpersonal communication?	How do we understand that element in mass communication?
Source	The originator of the message	It is an individual.	It is an individual.	It is one or more organizations.
Encoding	When the source organizes and prepares to send the message	It takes place in an individual's brain.	It takes place in an individual's brain.	It takes place in an organization using technology.
Transmitter	Performs the physical activity of sending the message	It is the person's vocal cords.	It is the person's vocal cords and technology (e.g., a phone).	It is a person's vocal cords and technology (e.g., a phone).
Channel	Pathway through which the transmitter sends the message	It is the air.	It is the air and technology (e.g., wires).	It is the air and technology (e.g., wires).
Receiver	The person or organization that gets the message	It can be one person or a few individuals in the same location.	It can be one or many individuals in one or more locations.	It is typically many people in different locations.
Decoding	The process by which the receiver makes sense of the message	It takes place in an individual's brain.	It takes place first via technology and then in an individual's brain.	It takes place first via technology and then in an individual's brain.
Feedback	A response to the message	It is immediate and directly to the source.	It is immediate and directly to the source.	It may be immediate or delayed and is generally indirect: other parts of the organization receive it and tell the source.
Noise	A sound in the communication situation that interferes with the delivery of the message	It can be environmental (e.g., noise in a park), mechanical (the person coughs so much the message gets lost), or semantic (the speaker doesn't know the language well).	It can be environmental, mechanical (e.g., park noise or static on the line), or semantic.	It can be environmental, mechanical, or semantic, sometimes caused by organizations.

is on the article, and you can see the actors who work on the show. Why, for example, shouldn't we consider Trevor Noah the "source" on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show*?

The answer is that he is only the most visible of an entire firm of people who prepared the mass media material. If Trevor were in the same room as you telling you about what he just read in the newspaper, he—as an individual—would be a source. But when you watch him do his monologue on *The Daily Show*, Trevor is no longer the source. That's because behind him is an organization that is creating the news satire for him to present. Sure, Trevor is reading the messages, and so it may seem that he should be called "the source." But the writing team of *The Daily Show* helped him write the script, produced and edited the videos he introduces, and prepared his set for the broadcast. Moreover, the photos and clips he satirizes sometimes come from news firms, such as ABC News. So Trevor is really just the most visible representative