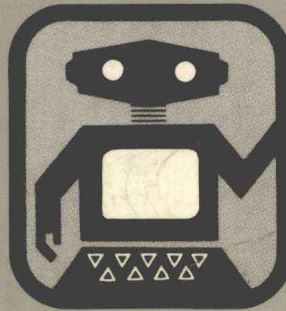
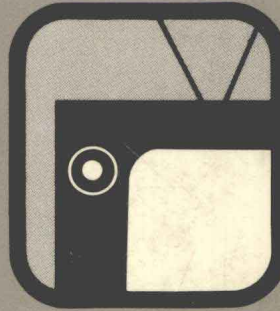
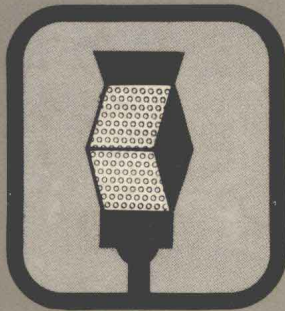
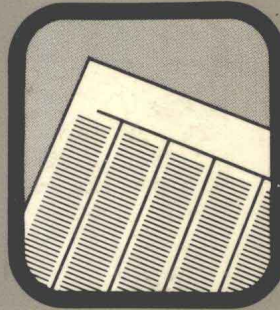


Mass Media in Ameri



Don R. Pember

Fifth Edition

Mass Media in America

Fifth Edition

Don R. Pember



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Preface

PREFACE TO FIFTH EDITION

This is the fifth edition of *Mass Media in America*. It was written fourteen years after the first edition was completed. A good deal has happened to American mass media in those fourteen years. In 1972 there were no VCRs, no personal computers, and no AM stereo radio stations. Only about 10 percent of the people had cable television, and the first cable television network, HBO, was yet to be launched. There was no MTV—no music videos. Reporters at most newspapers typed their stories on typewriters, not video display terminals. AM radio was still king; FM a distant cousin. Top-40 radio stations played songs by the Carpenters, Bread, Glen Campbell, and Ocean (Ocean?). No one had ever heard of Prince, Twisted Sister or Cindy Lauper. The film industry was in the doldrums. There were no video cassettes. “All in the Family,” “The Waltons,” and “Hawaii Five-O” were top rated television shows. Most people could receive only five or less TV channels. The Federal Communications Commission still regulated broadcasting. The term “deregulation” meant very little to most people. And the Watergate was simply an office building in Washington, D.C.

The subsequent three editions of this text still carried a good deal of the flavor of that first edition and the era in which it was generated. So when it came time to prepare a fifth edition of this book I decided it was time to rewrite rather than simply revise. My thinking and outlook had changed as well during that decade-and-a-half. While this book carries the title Fifth Edition it is really a new book. Every chapter—with the exception of the two history chapters which were heavily revised for the third edition—was completely rewritten. Considerable reorganization has taken place within chapters. This is not to say I did not try to salvage what I thought was useful from the fourth and previous editions. For I did. But I recast it or reshaped it to fit the way I now view the mass media in America.

The book still has a point of view; perhaps a bit too strong for the taste of some. But I simply cannot write about a topic as important to me as mass media without expressing an opinion on occasion. Still the book is fair; in most instances both sides are presented when a controversial issue is explored.

If anything, I believe more strongly now than when I prepared the first edition that the mass media comprise one of the most important institutions that exist in this society. And I don’t think many people realize that. Television is viewed as a device to watch a ballgame or a 30-minute comedy, not a part of a critical communication system. A newspaper is seen as a vehicle for the transmission of news and advertising, not an organ that helps shape public opinion or permits us to govern ourselves intelligently. If there is a message in this book it is that our mass communication system is just as important to us as our other vital systems, our educational system, our health care system, our economic system. And we must insist that our mass communications system performs at the highest possible level. Anything less will be detrimental to our society, to our community, to our very well-being.

The book is organized to first provide the reader with an introduction and a brief history of the mass media in America. Then, the operation of each major mass medium and media support system (i.e. the advertising industry) is described and analyzed. The critical relationship between the mass media and the government is then explored, as is the growing concentration of ownership in the mass communications industry. I attempt to evaluate media performance, using a model first proposed by Harold Lasswell, one of the nation’s truly thoughtful social scientists. Finally, I cast a wary eye on the future.















Putting a book together like this is a large task. And many persons deserve more than a simple pat on the back. The SRA team, though they have left the picturesque confines of Northern California and are now ensconced in that great city by the lake, Chicago, still provided yeoman service. Special thanks to Philip Gerould and Byron Riggan. My colleagues at the University of Washington and elsewhere have also been very helpful, as usual. A special

note of thanks to Bill Ames, who has probably done more to shape my thinking about mass media than any other faculty colleague as I matured from a fairly green assistant professor to whatever it is I am today. Two groups of individuals merit the heartiest thank you, however. I want to give special regards to students who tell me they enjoy using this book and demonstrate to me that they are learning from it.

This gives an author great encouragement. And warmest thanks to the Pember clan, Diann and Alison, who have seen me through five editions, and Brian, who has only been on hand for the last four. Without this crew there would be no fifth edition.

Don Pember
Seattle, 1986

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Chapter 1

The World of Mass Communication



In the middle of the fifteenth century in Mainz, Germany, a craftsman and inventor we remember as Johannes Gutenberg originated a means of mechanical printing with movable type. The first mass medium was born. Nearly five-and-a-half centuries later we stand in the midst of what many call a communications revolution, on the threshold of an “age of information.” Gutenberg’s simple printing process, used without significant change until the late nineteenth century, has been supplanted by exotic new methods. Film, radio, television, and other means of electronic data storage and transmission have joined printing to provide a system of mass communications that can inform and entertain us, can make us laugh or cry; that supports our political system, our economic system, and our social system; that can show us who we were, tell us who we are, and suggest who we might become.

The development of printing in the 1450s is regarded as ancient history to many persons living in the late twentieth century. But mass media are truly modern implements in the history of mankind. An-

Whether we want it or like it, mass media are a part of all our lives.

thropologists suggest that modern man—a *Homo sapien* with the same cranial capacity as a contemporary human being—has existed for about 40,000 years. For purposes of demonstrating how truly modern mass media are, imagine those 40,000 years as a single calendar year. It is now shortly before midnight on the last day of that year, December 31. Mechanical printing first occurred on December 27, not quite five days ago. Newsbooks, the precursors of the modern newspapers, first appeared in 1610, or about three-and-a-half days ago. Radio and film emerged in the early 1900s, about 9 a.m. today. And television appeared in the nation at the end of the 1930s or about 3 o’clock this afternoon. Mass media are truly a phenomenon of modern human history.

Whether we want it or like it, mass media are a part of all our lives. From the time we rise in the

morning until we switch off the lights at night, we are intermittently (and sometimes constantly) interacting with mass media. We wake up with the radio or television; read the morning newspaper with our breakfast; listen to broadcast or recorded music on our way to work or school; read magazines and books as part of our work, education or leisure; watch TV or go to the movies in the evenings. Added up, the number of hours we spend with mass media would be a staggering amount, almost a second lifetime. Little wonder, when the sheer amount of available mass media is considered. There are about 1,670 daily newspapers published each day; more than 63 million copies circulated nationwide. More than 7,500 weekly, bi-weekly, or tri-weekly newspapers publish more than 50 million copies. Approximately 10,000 different magazines are published every week, every other week, or every month. And 70,000 new book titles appear on the shelves each year. More than 1,400 over-the-air stations send their signals to television sets in more than 86 million American homes. Fifty-seven hundred cable systems carry television signals—including about 40 satellite cable television networks—to 33 million homes. Almost 8,500 radio stations broadcast to the more than 470 million radio sets in the United States. Between 400 and 500 feature films are produced in this country each year which appear on one of the nation’s 21,500 movie screens. Thousands more instructional and documentary films and short features are produced annually as well. Then there are magazines distributed on computer discs, electronic data transmissions systems like teletext and videotex, and many other emerging media forms. At times it seems we are in danger of collapsing from the sheer weight of it all.

The tremendous range of media forms is equalled or surpassed by the breadth of media content. From news to entertainment, ideas to helpful hints, virtually anything can be found somewhere. A contemporary American can find anything he or she wants in modern mass media. From the travels of the President to the travails of Hager the Horrible in the comic strips, from conservative philosophy in *The*

"All the News
That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

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NEW YORK, MONDAY, JULY 21, 1969

10 CENTS

MEN WALK ON MOON; ASTRONAUTS LAND ON TRANQUILITY; COLLECT ROCKS, PLANT FLAG

Voice From Moon: 'Eagle Has Landed'

EAGLE (the lunar module) Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.
HOUSTON: Roger, Tranquility, we copy you on the ground. You've got a bunch of guys about to turn blue. We're breathing again. Thanks a lot.
TRANQUILITY BASE: Thank you.
HOUSTON: You're looking good here.
TRANQUILITY BASE: A very smooth touchdown.
HOUSTON: Eagle, you are stay for T1. The first step in the lunar operation. Over.
TRANQUILITY BASE: Roger. Stay for T1.
HOUSTON: Roger and we see you setting the co.
TRANQUILITY BASE: Roger.
COLUMBIA (the command and service module) How do you read me?
HOUSTON: Columbia, he has landed Tranquility base. Eagle is at Tranquility. I read you five by five.

COLUMBIA: Yes, I heard the whole thing.
HOUSTON: Well, it's a good show.
COLUMBIA: Fantastic.
TRANQUILITY BASE: T1 second that.
APOLLO CONTROL: The next major stay-no stay will be for the T2 event. That is at 21 minutes 26 seconds after initiation of power descent.
COLUMBIA: Up telemetry command reset to re-require on high gain.

HOUSTON: Copy. Out.
APOLLO CONTROL: We have an unofficial time for that touchdown of 102 hours, 45 minutes, 42 seconds and we will update that.
HOUSTON: Eagle, you loaded 82 wrong. We want 10284.
TRANQUILITY BASE: Roger. Do you want the horizontal 55 1537?

HOUSTON: That's affirmative.
APOLLO CONTROL: We're now less than four minutes from our next stay-no stay. It will be for one complete revolution of the command module.
One of the first things that Armstrong and Aldrin will do after getting their next stay-no stay will be to remove their helmets and gloves.
HOUSTON: Eagle, you are stay for T2. Over.

Continued on Page 4, Col. 1

VOYAGE TO THE MOON

By ARCHIBALD MACLEISH

PRESENCE among us,
wanderer in our skies,
dazzle of silver in our heavens and on our
sister silver.
O
silver evanescent in our farthest thought—
the "silencing moon"—
"the glimmers of the moon"—
and we have touched you!
From the first of time,
before the first of time, before the
first men tasted time, we thought of you.
You were a wonder to us, unattainable,
a longing past the reach of longing,
a light beyond our light, our lives—perhaps
a meaning to us.
Now
our hands have touched you in your depth of night.
Three days and three nights we journeyed,
steered by farthest stars, climbed outward,
crossed the invisible tide-pool where the floating dust
falls one way or the other in the void between,
I followed that other down, encircled,
cold, faded death—unfathomable emptiness....
Then, the fourth day evening, we descended,
made fast, set foot at dawn upon your beaches,
affixed between our fingers your cold sand.
We stood here in the dusk, the cold, the silence....
and here, as at the first of time, we lift our heads.
Over us, more beautiful than the moon, is
moon, a wonder to us, unattainable,
a longing past the reach of longing,
a light beyond our light, our lives—perhaps
a meaning to us.
O, a meaning!
Over us on these silent beaches the bright
earth,
presence among us

LATE CITY EDITION

Weather: Rain, warm today; clear tonight. Sunny, pleasant tomorrow.
Temp. range today 80-86; Sunday 71-85. From: India yesterday.
66. Complete U.S. report on P. 35.



Neil A. Armstrong moves away from the leg of the landing craft after taking the first step on the surface of the moon.

A Powdery Surface Is Closely Explored

By JOHN NOBLE WILFORD

New York Times Staff Writer

HOUSTON, Monday, July 21—Men have landed and walked on the moon.
Two Americans, astronauts of Apollo 11, stirred their flagless four-legged lunar module safely and smoothly in the historic landing yesterday at 6:17 P.M. Eastern day light time.
Neil A. Armstrong, the 38-year-old civilian commander, radiated to earth and the mission control room here.
"Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed."
The first men to reach the moon—Mr. Armstrong and, his copilot, Col. Edwin E. Aldrin Jr., of the Air Force—brought their ship to rest on a level, rock strewn plain near the southwestern shore of the sea of Tranquility.
About six and a half hours later, Mr. Armstrong opened the landing craft's hatch, stepped slowly down the ladder and declared as he planted the first human footprint on the lunar crust.
"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

His first step on the moon came at 10:56:20 P.M., as a television camera outside the craft transmitted his every move to an awed and excited audience of hundreds of millions of people on earth.

Tentative Steps Test Soil

Mr. Armstrong's initial steps were tentative tests of the lunar soil's firmness and of his ability to move about easily in his bulky white spacesuit and backpack and under the influence of lunar gravity, which is one-sixth that of the earth.

"The surface is fine and powdery," the astronaut reported. "I can pick it up loosely with my toe. It does adhere to my boots. I only go in a small fraction of an inch, maybe an eighth of an inch. But I can see the footprints of my boots in the sands in the fine sandy particles."

After 10 minutes of Mr. Armstrong's testing, Colonel Aldrin joined him outside the craft.
The two men got busy setting up another television camera out from the lunar module, planting an American flag into the ground, scooping up soil and rock samples, deploying scientific experiments and beginning and doing a demonstration of their lunar agility.

They found walking and working on the moon less taxing than had been forecast. Mr. Armstrong once reported he was "very comfortable."

And people back on earth found the black-and-white television pictures of the bug-shaped lunar module and the men tramping about it so sharp and clear as to seem unreal, more like a toy and toy-like figures than human beings on the most daring and treacherous expedition thus far undertaken.

Nixon Telephones Congratulations

During one break in the astronauts' work, President Nixon congratulated them from the White House in what, he said, "certainly has to be the most historic telephone call ever made."

"Because of what you have done," the President told the astronauts, "the heavens have become a part of man's world. And as you talk to us from the sea of Tranquility it requires us to redouble our efforts to bring peace and tranquility to earth."

"For one priceless moment in the whole history of man all the people on this earth are truly one—one in their pride in what you have done and one in our prayers that you will return safely to earth."

Mr. Armstrong replied.
"Thank you, Mr. President. It's a great honor and privilege for us to be here representing not only the United States but men of peace of all nations, men with interests and a one destiny and men with a vision for the future."

Mr. Armstrong and Colonel Aldrin returned to their landing craft and closed the hatch at 1:12 A.M., 2 hours 21 minutes after opening the hatch on the moon. While the two men explored settled down to sleep.
Outside their vehicle the astronauts had found a stark

Continued on Page 2, Col. 1

Today's 4-Part Issue of The Times

The morning's issue of The Times and tonight's issue New York Times is divided into four parts. The first part is the fourth part, news of Apollo 11. Following is the News Index and includes Editorials and for today's issue.

Items on the landing on the moon appear on Page 1. General news begins on the first page of the second part. The third part is the third part, which includes sports, news, obituaries (Page 11) and television news and world reports (Page 15 and 52).

Most Sections and Index, Page 10



Col. Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. climbing down the ladder. The television camera was attached to a side of the lunar module.



Mr. Armstrong, right, and Colonel Aldrin raise the U.S. flag. A metal rod at right angles to the mast keeps flag unfurled.

Since the development of printing, our greatest achievements have been recorded in the public press. It is easy to imagine headlines from eras before newspapers or television—KING JOHN SIGNS MAGNA CARTA, COLUMBUS DISCOVERS NEW WORLD.



Most Americans got their first close-up view of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev when he was interviewed on the CBS television program "Face the Nation." This is a good example of the potential of the visual medium and the wide range of subjects with which it can deal.

CBS News

National Review to liberal thought in the *Nation*, from the culture of the New York ballet to the Culture Club of Boy George—it's all there. We may have to look for it at times, visit that out-of-the-way book store or obscure theater, but the mass media of no other nation contain the range of material contained in the mass media in the United States. Finally, this news and information and entertainment is something that is available to virtually everyone in this nation. Even the urban poor and persons living in extreme rural America have access to some form of mass media.

WHAT THE MASS MEDIA MEAN TO US

We have established that there are a vast number of mass media and a wide range of media content available to almost everyone in the country. What does this mean to us living in the United States in the latter part of the twentieth century? A class of junior/senior communications and journalism students at the University of Washington was asked to imagine what this nation would be like if mass media suddenly disappeared from the face of the planet. Their answers are fascinating. Many noted it would be

much quieter with no radios, televisions, or stereos. People wouldn't really know what was happening in the world, the country, even just across the state. Millions more would be out of work, since that many people are employed either directly by the mass media or in jobs that directly support the mass media, such as making newsprint. People would spend more time talking with their friends and relatives; social contact would increase.

But the loss of mass media would also affect some of the nation's basic institutions. The political system and government would probably change dramatically. Without mass media, it is doubtful we could elect a single President for this large nation; most persons would never see or hear the candidates. Who would be the watchdog of government, the role played now by the press? Our educational system would be forced to change. Without books, audio-visual materials, and other forms of mass media students could not be expected to learn as much and as quickly. Research would also be dramatically slowed without journals to publish the results of tests and experiments. Scientists in Boston and Denver could be working on exactly the same problem and never know it unless they traveled to meet each other. Our economy would suffer. Could we operate a capitalist system so heavily involved with the production of consumer goods without advertising to both inform and promote these goods?

Americans would be forced to return to creating rather than buying most of their culture if the mass media disappeared. It would be a culture of folk arts with heavy regional and even local emphases. Society in general would likely be far less homogeneous. There would be no national role models for people to copy, no outside agencies (besides family, church, or school) to dispense acceptable social conventions. Some of the students feared they would not know what to wear to classes because of a lack of weather reports. Others said they would exercise less without aerobic dance classes (no more music) or miniature tape players to wear when jogging. Most all agreed that their grades would improve if they were not frequently distracted by television or movies.

One summed up the feelings of many by saying that without the mass media, the world would be pretty "boring."

This exercise demonstrates that mass media today are far more than simple diversions. Our mass communications system is an integral part of our political system, our economy, our cultural and educational institutions, and our society in general. That is why they are worthy of analysis and criticism. Mass media—rightly or wrongly—have been vested with important responsibilities in our society. When our mass communications system malfunctions there can be serious consequences for the nation and its people.

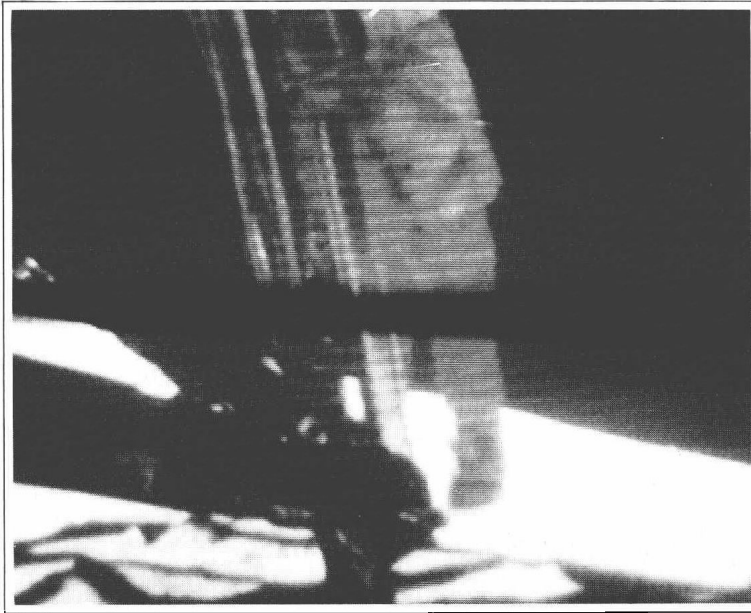
From Conversation to Communication

Mass media were created to do a fairly simple thing: transmit a message from one person to other persons. This is the same thing that happens when two persons talk to each other. The same process takes place: the source of the communication sends a message through a channel to a receiver. The source usually encodes the message, that is, puts the thoughts into words, and speaks these words or writes them out. The receiver then decodes the message—translates the words into thoughts. This, of course, implies that both source and receiver know the code, or the language.

The only differences between what we call interpersonal communications—face-to-face, between two people or a small group—and mass communications are these:

1. Through mass communication the message is sent through a channel that can reach a great many people at one time—*mass* communication.
2. Mass communication generally requires the use of some kind of device interposed between the source and the receiver, some kind of medium to make massive communication possible. Hence, we talk about mass *media*.

Some people refer to the two kinds of communications as interpersonal communication and inter-



A man sets foot on the moon and 500 million people are there—via TV. The dark streak running horizontally across this picture of Neil Armstrong descending the ladder on the LEM was caused by an interruption of television ground data at the tracking station in California, where the pictures were being received from the moon.

Compix of United Press International

posed communication. The interposed device is usually some kind of hardware or technological tool. It amplifies the message or allows it to be reproduced a great many times very cheaply. Television production equipment, printing presses, stereos, radios, video recorders, satellites, all of these devices are fundamental in mass communication.

Because of the imposition of the device between the source of the message and its receiver, mass communication has some advantages over interpersonal communication. (But there are disadvantages as

An important disadvantage of mass communications is that it is nearly always one-way communication.

well.) One clear advantage is the speed with which a message can be transmitted to a large audience. Television and radio are instantaneous communication. Half a billion people saw astronaut Neil Armstrong become the first human to walk on the moon. And they saw it almost the same instant it happened; there was a few seconds time delay in transmission from the moon.

Messages that flow through the mass media tend to be more accurate than those transmitted by interpersonal communication, and this is another advantage. Why are they more accurate? Mass communicators tend to be professionals, trained to observe and relay messages accurately. Errors are certainly made in the press. And today, when broadcasters have the opportunity to go directly on the air with a news story by using sophisticated mini-cameras and transmitters, errors become even more common since the journalist does not have the opportunity to check and evaluate facts before communicating them to the community. Nevertheless, mass communications is usually better than interpersonal communications at relaying the correct information.

An important disadvantage of mass communications is that it is nearly always one-way communication. That is, the receiver of the message doesn't have the opportunity to talk back, to ask questions. Communication researchers call this back-talk, *feedback*. A message is frequently misunderstood when there is no opportunity for feedback during communications. A viewer can't ask Dan Rather or Tom Brokaw a question about a news report on interest rates or a Congressional debate. The broadcaster

moves right along to the next topic. A newspaper will not respond no matter how many questions a persistent reader may ask. A letter to the editor can be written, but this takes time and even then the question may never be answered. Lack of feedback creates what researchers call *low message understandability*. Message understandability will always be higher when interpersonal rather than mass communications is used.

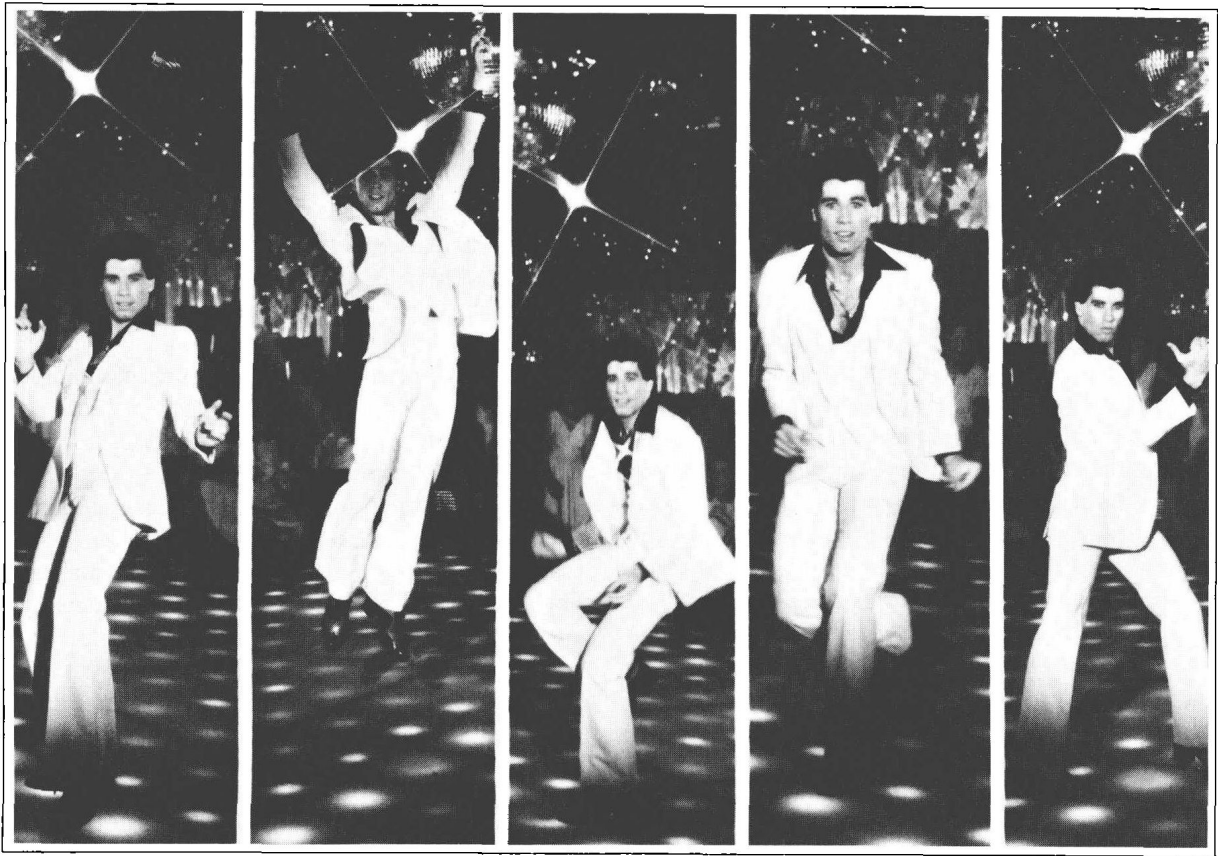
The interposition of the device between the speaker and the receiver has fostered some other important developments. It has permitted humankind to overcome two of its earliest adversaries, time and space. A written communication system made it possible for civilization to develop on this planet; it gave the human race a memory that lasted for more than a single generation. Knowledge accumulated in one era could be passed on to the next. Certainly, preliterate humans passed down stories and tales that were instructive to each new age. But a communication system tied solely to verbal skills or an oral tradition is a limited system. Written communications and later mass communications provided the ability to overcome time through a permanent record that permitted meaningful human development.

The swiftness of electronic communication has permitted the human race to overcome space. Until the development of the telegraph, the message and the messenger (someone delivering the mail or newspapers) arrived at the same time. There was no separation between transportation and communication, as Daniel Czitrom has noted in *Media and the American Mind*. The first telegraph dissolved the unity between the message and the messenger. In doing so it dramatically altered distance. The distance between Washington D.C. and Baltimore, the terminal points of Samuel F. B. Morse's first telegraph line, was no greater than the distance between two city blocks, for the purposes of communicating a short message. Today mass communications has virtually obliterated the miles between almost any two points on the earth. Not only can we communicate short messages instantly, we can transmit voice and pictures as well via communications satellites. We have come to expect to know what happened in distant parts of the world almost as soon as events occur.

Finally, the development of mass media has in many ways made the simple process of communications far more complex, perhaps even complicated. Gigantic industries have developed to undertake mass communications. These large newspaper chains, television networks, publishing houses, motion picture studios, all must expend considerable energy to merely sustain themselves. Like giant animals that must graze perpetually, the giant communications corporations must work to remain alive. In some nations this work entails communicating a government message which often distorts the honest communication the medium is designed to transmit. In this nation most of our mass media must constantly publish and broadcast commercial messages to sustain themselves. Often the transmission of information and entertainment to the community is altered or harmed because of this commercial function. Commercial television, for example, can survive only if it receives support from commercial sponsors. A percentage of broadcast time is set aside for advertisements. Sponsors, however, are not philanthropists by nature and insist their messages be broadcast on programs that viewers will watch. The greater the number of viewers, of course, the higher the rates the television network can charge the sponsor. There is a premium attached if the television networks can design programs that attract a large number of advertisers. Sometimes advertisers want large numbers of viewers; sometimes they want the right kinds of viewers. In either case, the wishes of the advertisers become paramount in many instances. Communication of a message, information or entertainment becomes secondary to survival (or more often success) of the television network. This is a notion that will be explored in considerable detail throughout the remainder of this book.

COMMON THREADS

In the next 13 chapters of this book an attempt is made to describe, explain, evaluate, and analyze the mass media in the United States, to demonstrate how they relate to other important segments of our society and, when useful, to compare them with mass



"Saturday Night Fever" was a hit both at the box office and the record stores. For the first time in years a recording and a film hit the top of the charts together. The excitement in both the motion picture and the recording demonstrates the ability of mass media to communicate a visceral message.

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media in other parts of the world. A full appreciation of how the mass media operate in this nation is dependent upon four things: some understanding of how mass media developed in the United States; realization of the heavily commercial nature of nearly all American mass media; a grasp of the special relationship between the United States press and the government; and the recognition that our media system is totally unplanned and that technological opportunity has frequently dictated its development. The history of our media systems is covered in

Chapters 2 and 5. What follows is a brief exploration of the other three factors mentioned above.

ECONOMIC SUPPORT AND THE AMERICAN PRESS

Every mass medium in the nation, indeed the world, needs financial support in order to continue to operate. Even the individual who publishes the single-sheet, dittoed, neighborhood newsletter needs

money to buy paper and ditto fluid. But there are many different ways in which publications or broadcasting stations or film studios can gain this financial support.

Users or consumers are frequently called upon to pay the cost of the mass media which they read or view. Newspapers and magazines have subscribers; theatergoers buy tickets to see a movie; music lovers pay for the records they take home to play on the stereo. But magazine and newspaper readers rarely pay more than a small portion of the cost of the publication. And only the public television and radio stations in the United States (and a virtual handful of subscription radio stations) go to listeners or viewers for money to run the broadcast operations.

Special interest groups such as political parties or labor unions or even churches will often support a newspaper or a magazine. This occurs at almost an invisible level in the United States, for such publications are circulated usually only among the members of the special interest group. But in other parts of the world, publications sponsored by such groups have large general circulations. In Copenhagen the daily newspaper *Aktuelt* is owned and subsidized by trade unions, but read widely in the Danish city. *Pravda* is the voice of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union. And *De Volkskrant* is a popular Dutch daily newspaper that is sponsored by the Catholic Church. The special interest publications all earn revenues through subscriptions and/or advertising, but it is the party or the union or the church that frequently keeps the newspaper or magazine alive.

In many parts of the world the government directly supports the operation of the mass media. This is especially true in developing nations, and more often applies to broadcasting operations than to newspapers or magazines. In some instances the government provides but a small subsidy to help the publication survive. Many newspapers in the Scandinavian countries—which many regard as among the freest newspapers in the world—are directly subsidized by the government with small financial grants distributed through independent commissions. (The U.S. government indirectly subsidizes newspapers in the United States by providing low cost mailing rates.) In other instances the govern-

ment will pay all or most of the bills. Television stations in Africa, for example, are usually owned and operated by the government.

The publication or broadcast of commercial advertising is another way in which the mass media can sustain themselves. And in the United States, this is the dominant mode of financial support for newspapers, most magazines, radio, and television. Advertising dollars pay most of the bills for the press in America. While the mass media in the United States are not uniquely commercial, for advertising supports publications and broadcasting stations around the world, American mass media are undoubtedly the most heavily commercial.

Look, for example, at the media systems in Western Europe, systems as close to ours as any in the world. Many European television stations carry no advertising at all. Those that do usually limit advertising

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to 15 to 20 minutes each day with none on Sundays or holidays. Four or five commercials are bunched together and shown on the hour and half-hour between six and nine p.m. In contrast, nine minutes of advertising is broadcast each hour by American network television stations during the prime evening viewing hours, and up to sixteen minutes of commercial per hour are carried during other times of the night and day. In Britain, advertising rarely constitutes more than 40 percent of the content of a daily newspaper. United States' daily newspapers normally carry between 65 and 75 percent advertising. Several reasons might be cited for the heavy commercial emphasis in the American press, not the least of which is the strong imperative to earn a high profit. Successful broadcasting stations and newspapers in this nation have some of the highest profit margins of all businesses and industries in the nation.

(This matter is discussed in greater detail in later chapters.)

The Impact of Economic Support

There is an old saying: He who pays the piper calls the tune. Does this mean that the source of financial support can dictate the content of a mass medium? Certainly a newspaper supported by a labor union would be expected to reflect the union point of view. And a government-owned and operated radio station is unlikely to broadcast anti-government speeches or lectures. Does commercial advertising have a similar impact on U.S. mass media? Do advertisers dictate the content of the press?

The question needs to be discussed on several levels. First, individual advertisers rarely can influence a newspaper or broadcasting station to kill a story. American journalists bristle with anger at the mere thought of advertiser censorship. Frequently the attempt by the businessperson to stop the publication of a story results in more harm than the publication of the material would cause. There is no doubt that advertisers on occasion do succeed in blocking a story, but this is rare. Advertisers are far more successful at getting the positive news they want published through news releases and press parties than they are at stopping the publication or broadcast of a negative news item. (The impact of this kind of publication is discussed in Chapter 3.)

But the fact that commercial advertising does support the mass media in America does have an impact on the content of the mass media in other ways. As noted previously, sponsors and advertisers want to reach as many people as possible with their messages; they tend to support the mass media that reach the largest audience. To be successful and gain more advertising a mass medium should appeal to the largest audience. Reader or viewer or listener appeal will therefore determine content. Indirectly, then, advertising (not advertisers) has influenced the content of the medium. The decision to program "Dallas" rather than a series of Moliere's plays is based largely upon the desire to win a large audience. Similarly, the decision to run a gossip column in a newspaper

rather than a news analysis is guided by the same reasoning.

Tone or context are also important to advertisers. Advertisers need to feel comfortable with the programming or content. It should not be offensive so as to cast a dark image on the sponsor or advertiser. And the medium should not consistently bite the hands that feed it. A newspaper may successfully publish an occasional story critical of local business or industry. But if a newspaper maintains a continual hostile tone, advertisers will likely find another medium in which to peddle their wares. Hence, in several ways, advertising does have an impact on the content of the American mass media.

And this is a generality that applies to all mass media which rely upon commercial sponsors for support, and especially to American newspapers, magazines, radio, and television which are particularly dependent on such support.

The Press and the Constitution

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution guarantees to all citizens freedom of speech and press. Ours is not the only nation with such a constitutional guarantee; most nations in the world have such a statement in their constitution or national charter. But the United States is one of the few nations in the world where efforts are made to live up to both the letter and the spirit of that guarantee. Albeit there have been some exceptions; still, freedom of expression has been a meaningful guarantee to both the people and the nation during the almost-200 hundred year history of the United States Constitution. Modern ideas about freedom of expression were forged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and reflect the sentiments popular in that so-called Age of Reason. Humans are creatures of reason. But to obtain fulfillment as a reasonable being the mind must be free to question, examine, challenge, and debate. "Suppression of belief, opinion, or other expression is an affront to the dignity of man, a negation of man's essential nature," wrote constitutional scholar Thomas I. Emerson in *The System of Freedom of Expression*. The individual must

be free to speak and write to advance the search for truth and other ideals that sustain society.

In the United States an additional reason exists for us to cherish and defend the guarantee of freedom of expression: the rights of free speech and free press are an essential pillar upon which our democratic system rests. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine the operation of this democracy without freedom of expression. Power rests with the people in our political system. We elect leaders to operate temporarily the government for us. Without free debate or open discussion we could not hope to make our representative democracy work. The act of voting might be viewed as the ultimate act of freedom of expression, more powerful than either the pen or the sword.

The mass media play several important roles in this process. The press remains an important forum for public discussion about political issues. News coverage of meetings and protest rallies and debates provides readers or viewers with ideas and information. The mass media can also amplify the voice of the people. The protest of a citizen in rural Iowa may be barely audible; but it is much harder for political leaders to ignore an editorial in *The Des Moines Register*. Finally, the people depend upon the press to act as their eyes and ears—to inform citizens on what our chosen leaders are doing and to sound an alert when things are not going as they should. This is sometimes called the “watchdog role.”

The mass media have assumed an important function in the governance of this nation and the maintenance of this democracy. It is doubtful that this was planned by the men who wrote the Constitution. But we were a small nation in the 1780s, with few people and little government. Today we are one of the largest nations in the world with multiple layers of government. Without the press to serve as a citizen's eyes and ears and voice, the average individual would have little information about what the government is doing, few ideas on how things might be done more effectively, and little ability to communicate those ideas that are important. Anyone studying the mass media must constantly remember this important role which has been vested in the American press.

Mass Communication and Technology

Technology, the magic key that unlocked so many doors in the 20th Century, is what has made the “mass” part of mass media possible. Mechanical printing, film, radio, television, satellites, and many

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other elements in mass media are the products of technological development. At the same time, other technological improvements have shortened our work weeks, made taking care of the home and garden easier, and have given Americans the time needed to use the immense mass media available. Film, radio, television, even newspapers would have far less an impact upon our society if we were still living under conditions that existed only 100 years ago when most men and women were forced to work 12 to 14 hours each day just to support themselves and their families.

In many nations the technological development of the mass media is something that is controlled or at least closely monitored by the government or some government-sponsored commission. Television was not introduced into India for many years, for example, because the government believed that its introduction would have detrimental affects upon the nation. The number of broadcasting stations and publications in many Third World nations is closely controlled by the rulers of those nations. And in many instances the role the mass media must play is determined by the state.

This has never been allowed to happen in the United States, for better or for worse. In this nation only two things have determined when and how mass media innovation was introduced: the availability of the technology and the belief of those private interests who controlled the technology that it could be profitable to introduce it to the public. This unregulated approach has had an impact upon the growth of our mass media systems. In many in-