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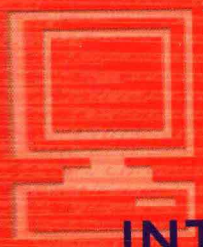
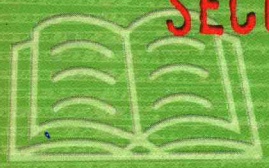
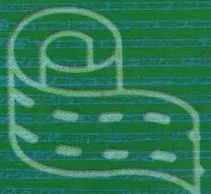




INTRODUCTION TO mass communication

MEDIA LITERACY AND CULTURE



Stanley J. Baran

INTRODUCTION TO mass communication

MEDIA LITERACY AND CULTURE

SECOND EDITION

Stanley J. Baran
Bryant College

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Preface

ON ELECTION NIGHT 2000, MILLIONS OF AMERICANS WENT TO bed thinking that Democrat Al Gore had been elected president of the United States. By the morning, the television and cable networks that gave the election to Gore had reversed their call, naming Republican George W. Bush the winner. Then they reversed themselves again, deciding that the vote was too close to call. Over the ensuing months, questions about the performance of the networks were raised by the public, by politicians, and even by media professionals themselves. The collective judgment was harsh—in their rush to be the first to declare a winner, the broadcasters had simply blown it. Even the most respected news organizations, forced to toil in a hypercommercialized, entertainment-at-all-costs atmosphere, had lost sight of their primary commitment to public service.

This was not the only time the media themselves became the focus of attention in the 2000 presidential campaign. The television networks were faulted for hosting debates that excluded all but the Republican and Democratic candidates. Democratic vice-presidential candidate Joe Lieberman routinely blasted the moral failure of the Hollywood movie industry as part of his standard stump speech. Democrats cried foul when the Bush campaign released a television ad criticizing Gore's prescription drug plan for seniors in which the word *rats* appeared on the screen in oversize capital letters for a fraction of a second after an image of Gore and before the word *bureaucrats*: Democrats charged that Republicans were using subliminal messages to influence American voters without their conscious knowledge. Commentators from both the political left and the political right accused the media of derailing serious public discussion of campaign finance reform because the media themselves are enriched by candidates' money in every election.

Meanwhile, away from the election, the Time Warner/AOL merger and its impact on people's cable television choices and Internet access were front-page news. Congress held hearings on the marketing of inappropriate entertainment content to young people. Magazine ads for apparel maker Benetton featuring death row inmates caused a public furor. The morality of *Temptation Island* and other "reality television" shows was hotly debated in the press. The National Association of Broadcasters went to war with the Federal Communications Commission over the latter's plan to license low-power community radio. People were appalled by the ineptitude of the public relations campaign mounted by Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc., after many fatalities were linked to the failure of Firestone tires on Ford's Explorer sport utility vehicles.

The media, like sports and politics, had become something to talk about. To argue over. To dissect and analyze.

Those of us who teach media know that these conversations are essential to the functioning of a democratic society. We also know that what moves these conversations from the realm of chatting and griping to that of effective public discourse is media education—the systematic study of media and their operation in our political and economic system, as well as their contribution to the development and maintenance of the culture that binds us together and defines us. We now call this media education *media literacy*.

Regardless of what an individual course is called—Introduction to Mass Communication, Introduction to Mass Media, Media and Society, Media and Culture—media literacy has been a part of university media education for more than three decades. The course has long been designed to fulfill the following goals:

- to increase students' knowledge and understanding of the mass communication process and the mass media industries;
- to increase students' awareness of how they interact with those industries and with media content to create meaning;
- and to help students become more skilled and knowledgeable consumers of media content.

These are all aspects of media literacy as it is now understood. This text makes explicit what has been implicit for so long: that media literacy skills can and should be taught directly and that, as we travel through the twenty-first century, media literacy is an essential survival skill for everyone in our society.

PERSPECTIVE

This focus on media literacy grows naturally out of a *cultural perspective* on mass communication. This text takes the position that media, audiences, and culture develop and evolve in concert. The current prevailing notion in the discipline of mass communication is that, while not all individuals are directly affected by every media message they encounter, the media nonetheless do have important cultural effects. Today, the media are accepted as powerful forces in the process through which we come to know ourselves and one another. They function both as a forum where issues are debated and as the storytellers that carry our beliefs across time and space. Through these roles, the media are central to the creation and maintenance of both our dominant culture and our various bounded cultures.

This cultural orientation toward mass communication and the media places much responsibility on media consumers. In the past, people were considered either victims of media influence or impervious to it. The cultural orientation asserts that audience members are as much a part of the

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mass communication process as are the media technologies and industries. As important agents in the creation and maintenance of their own culture, audience members have an obligation not only to participate in the process of mass communication but also to participate actively, appropriately, and effectively. In other words, they must bring media literacy—the ability to effectively and efficiently comprehend and use mass media—to the mass communication process.

FEATURES OF THIS TEXT

The features that made this text successful in its first edition have been retained in this revision.

- **Emphasis on developing media literacy.** The pedagogical features of this book are designed to support and improve media literacy skills. Chapter 2 lays out the elements of media literacy, and an emphasis on media literacy is woven throughout the text. Each chapter from Chapter 3 to 15 contains a section, specific to that chapter's medium or issue, on developing media literacy skills. For example, Chapter 5, Newspapers, offers guidelines for interpreting the relative placement of newspaper stories. Chapter 9, Television, discusses how to identify staged news events on television. Other media literacy topics include recognizing product placements in movies, evaluating news based on anonymous sources, and protecting personal privacy on the Internet.
- **Cultural perspective.** The media—either as a forum where important issues are debated or as storytellers that carry our beliefs and values across people, space, and time—are central to the creation and maintenance of our various cultures. This book advocates the idea that media audiences can take a more active role in the mass communication process and help shape the cultures that, in turn, shape them.
- **Brief historical sections**. Historical sections at the beginning of each medium chapter offer relevant background information for students. By providing historical context, these sections help students understand current issues in the media landscape.
- **Focus on convergence.** Each medium chapter includes a section called Trends and Convergence. These sections emphasize the influence of new technologies on media and society.
- **Three types of pedagogical boxes throughout the text.** These boxes give students a deeper understanding of media-related issues and the role of media in society.

  Using Media to Make a Difference These boxes highlight interesting examples of how media practitioners and audiences use the mass communication process to further important social,

political, or cultural causes. For example, Chapter 7, Film, highlights the African American films and film industry that grew up in response to the D. W. Griffith film, *The Birth of a Nation.*

Cultural Forum These boxes highlight media-related cultural issues that are currently debated in the mass media. Titles include, for example, Advertorials Aimed at Young Girls and The Passing of the Independent Bookseller.

Media Echoes These boxes demonstrate that the cultural and social debates surrounding the different media tend to be repeated throughout history, regardless of the technology or era in question. For example, the public relations chapter discusses early PR efforts to encourage women to smoke, and the advertising chapter covers advertisers' more recent attempts to attract teenage smokers.

KEY CHANGES TO THE SECOND EDITION

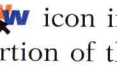
Several important changes were made to enhance and update the text in its second edition.

- Coverage of the Internet has been moved forward in the text, from Chapter 14 to Chapter 3, to reflect the pervasive influence the Internet has had on all other media. This new location allows for a stronger foundation and more thoroughly integrated coverage of convergence throughout the rest of the text. Today, no discussion of any mass medium makes sense without prior understanding of the Internet.
- The definition of media literacy has been expanded and refined to include the work of James Potter and Alan Rubin. The Media Literacy Primer has been moved to Chapter 3 to provide a stronger foundation for the rest of the book.
- The material on alternative media has been expanded to include low-power radio, P2P systems (Gnutella, Napster, Freenet), Zines, and other innovations.
- Chapter 15, Global Media, is now more focused on the globalization of the media industries, with special attention paid to issues of cultural imperialism.
- Boxes have been updated to cover current topics and issues. New Cultural Forum topics include, for example, personal privacy in the digital age; alternative, "anti-Hollywood" approaches to making movies; and the Firestone/Ford public relations debacle. New Using Media to Make a Difference topics include Our Bodies, Ourselves and Rock 'n' Roll, Radio, and Race Relations.

- All statistical entries have been updated. These changes include new information on Internet demographics; new media consumption statistics; and new statistics for all media sales and circulation figures.
- Coverage of media ownership has been updated—to the extent possible. While it is challenging to keep up with changes in media ownership, we have made a diligent effort to provide the most recent information on mergers and acquisitions in media conglomerate ownership.

LEARNING AIDS

Several types of learning aids are included in the book to support student learning and to enhance media literacy skills.

- Lists of relevant and updated World Wide Web sites at the end of every chapter enable students to locate additional resources and encourage students to practice using the Internet. Many paragraphs in the second edition are marked with the new  icon indicating that additional material appears on the student portion of the Online Learning Center. This material includes Web links, worksheets, and interactive exercises.
- Photo essays raise provocative questions, encouraging students to further develop their critical thinking and analytical skills.
- Important Resources, an annotated listing of books and articles for further reading, provides additional information for students.
- Chapter Reviews allow students to make sure they have focused on each chapter's most important material.
- Questions for Review further highlight important content and provide a review of key points.
- Questions for Critical Thinking and Discussion encourage students to investigate their own cultural assumptions and media use and to engage one another in debate on critical issues.
- Key Terms are printed in bold type in the text, defined where they appear, and included in an extensive glossary at the end of the book.
- An exhaustive list of references is provided at the end of the book.

ORGANIZATION

Introduction to Mass Communication: Media Literacy and Culture is divided into four parts. Part One, Laying the Groundwork, as its name implies, provides the foundation for the study of mass communication. Chapter 1, Mass Communication, Culture, and Mass Media, defines important concepts and establishes the basic premises of the cultural perspective on mass communication with its focus on media literacy. Chapter 2, Media

Literacy and Culture, provides an overview of the development of mass communication and the media and elaborates on the meaning and implications of media literacy. Chapter 3, The Internet and the World Wide Web: Changing the Paradigm examines the new online computer technologies and how they are reshaping the traditional mass communication process. Included are discussions of such current topics as MP3 and Napster, online advertising and selling, controlling Internet expression, and copyright issues. This discussion of the Internet appears in the groundwork section of this text because of the Internet's transformative power, not only over existing media but over people's interactions with those media.

Part Two, Media, Media Industries, and Media Audiences, includes chapters on the individual mass media technologies and the industries that have grown up around them—books (Chapter 4), newspapers (Chapter 5), magazines (Chapter 6), film (Chapter 7), radio and sound recording (Chapter 8), and television (Chapter 9). All of these chapters open with a short history of the medium and continue with discussions of the medium and its audiences, the scope and nature of the medium, and current trends and convergence in the industry and technology. Each chapter concludes with a section on developing a media literacy skill specifically related to that medium. Throughout each chapter there is a focus not just on the industry and technology but also on cultural issues and the interaction of culture, medium, and audience. For example, in Chapter 5, the issue of "redlining" in the newspaper industry is raised. Newspapers today must attract readers who are demographically appealing to advertisers. But what does this "industrial reality" mean to readers who do not fit that mold? What happens when newspapers abandon their traditional role as the voice of the community? Can our democracy function if segments of its citizenry are excluded from political and cultural discourse? These and numerous other questions arise when audience, culture, and medium are considered together.

Part Three, Supporting Industries, carries this same approach into two related areas—public relations (Chapter 10) and advertising (Chapter 11). As in the medium-specific chapters, each of these chapters begins with a brief history, continues with a discussion of audience, the scope of the industry, and current trends and convergence, and concludes with guidelines on developing relevant media literacy skills.

Part Four, Mass-Mediated Culture in the Information Age, tackles several important areas. Chapter 12, Theories of Mass Communication, provides a short history of mass communication theory and compares and evaluates the field's major theories. Chapter 13, Mass Communication Research and Effects, explains the different forms of mass communication research and explores the ongoing debate over media effects. The chapter considers such topics as media and violence, media and gender and racial/ethnic stereotyping, and media and the electoral process. Chapter 14, Media Freedom, Regulation, and Effects, provides a detailed dis-

cussion of the First Amendment, focusing on refinements in interpretation and application made over the years in response to changes in technology and culture. The chapter analyzes such topics and issues as privacy, the use of cameras in the courtroom, and changing definitions of indecency. The chapter concludes with an extended discussion of media ethics and professionalism. Chapter 15, Global Media, looks at media systems in other parts of the world and concludes with a discussion of local cultural integrity versus cultural imperialism.

NEW AND UPDATED SUPPLEMENTS

The supplements package available with the text includes a full array of tools designed to facilitate both teaching and learning.

- An *Instructor's Resource Guide* provides teaching aids for each chapter, including learning objectives, key terms and concepts, lecture ideas, video suggestions, and a guide to using the Media Literacy Worksheets. Also included in the guide are more than 70 transparency masters and a test bank of more than 1,000 test items.
- A computerized test bank offers the test items in either Macintosh or Windows formats. Questions can be edited and new questions can be added.
- *Media Interactive*, a student CD-ROM, offers students interactive quizzes, summaries, key terms, activity worksheets, CNN video clips, and Web links. *Media Interactive* can be bundled with the text at no cost to the student.
- Updated CNN custom video clips, each approximately three to five minutes long, bring to life the concepts discussed in the text. This video is free to instructors using the text.
- The Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/baran2) has been thoroughly updated. The new site includes Media Literacy worksheets, an Image Bank drawn from images in the text, PowerPoint® slides, electronic transparencies, a Web tutorial, a bulletin board, a syllabus builder for the instructor, an online study guide, hot links to media resources for the student, and more.
- McGraw-Hill PageOut is designed for the instructor just beginning to explore Web options. PageOut allows even the novice computer user to create a course Web site with a template provided by McGraw-Hill.
- *PowerWeb: Mass Communication* is a password-protected Web site that includes current articles from *Annual Editions: Mass Media*, curriculum-based materials, weekly updates with assessment, informative and timely world news, Web links, research tools, student study tools, interactive exercises, and much more.

- An *Instructor's CD-ROM* (compatible with both Macintosh and IBM computers) offers electronic versions of the *Instructor's Resource Guide*, PowerPoint® slides, electronic transparencies, and worksheets.
- *Media Literacy Worksheets and Journal* has been revised and expanded by Stephen D. Perry, Illinois State University. The worksheets for each chapter include activities that direct students to selected Web sites, suggest topics for entries in an ongoing Media Journal, and further explore the media literacy skills highlighted in each chapter. There are more than 75 worksheets in total; this supplement can be shrink-wrapped with the text at no cost to the student.
- A companion reader, *Readings in Mass Communication*, by Kimberly Massey, offers 46 thought-provoking articles that support the main themes in the book. The reader can be bundled with the text at a discounted price to the students.
- *The Mayfield Quick Guide to the Internet for Communication Students, Version 2.0*, by John Courtright and Elizabeth Perse, offers instruction and tips on using the Internet, with a focus on addresses and sites of interest to communication students. The guide can be shrink-wrapped with the text at no cost to the student.
- A supplemental text, *The World Wide Web: A Mass Communication Perspective, 2001 Update*, by Barbara Kaye and Norm Medoff, provides students with an overview of how the Web is being used commercially by the various media industries. This text can also be shrink-wrapped with the text.

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Any project of this magnitude requires the assistance of many people. Two colleagues, Susan Beauchamp of Rhode Island College and Bob Mendenhall of Southwestern Adventist University, were particularly helpful with their sharp eyes and good suggestions.

Reviewers are an indispensable part of the creation of a good textbook. In preparing for this second edition, I was again impressed with the thoughtful comments made by my colleagues in the field. Although I didn't know them by name, I found myself in long-distance, anonymous debate with several superb thinkers, especially about some of the text's most important concepts. Their collective keen eye and questioning attitude sharpened each chapter to the benefit of both writer and reader. (Any errors or misstatements that remain in the book are of course my sole responsibility.) Now that I know who they are, I would like to thank the reviewers by name. **Second Edition Reviewers:** Rob Bellamy, Duquesne University; Stephen R. Curtis, Jr., East Connecticut State University; Lyombe Eko, University of Maine; Beth Grobman Burruss, DeAnza College; Junhao Hong, State University of New York at Buffalo; Carol Liebler, Syracuse University; Robert Main, California State University, Chico;

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Stephen Perry, Illinois State University; Eric Pierson, University of San Diego; Ramona Rush, University of Kentucky; Tony Silvia, University of Rhode Island; and Richard Welch, Kennesaw State University. **First Edition Reviewers:** David Allen, Illinois State University; Sandra Braman, University of Alabama; Tom Grimes, Kansas State University; Kirk Hallahan, Colorado State University; Katharine Heintz-Knowles, University of Washington; Paul Husselbee, Ohio University; Seong Lee, Appalachian State University; Rebecca Ann Lind, University of Illinois at Chicago; Maclyn McClary, Humboldt State University; Guy Meiss, Central Michigan University; Debra Merskin, University of Oregon; Scott R. Olsen, Central Connecticut State University; Ted Pease, Utah State University; Linda Perry, *Florida Today* newspaper; Elizabeth Perse, University of Delaware; Tina Pieraccini, State University of New York-College at Oswego; Michael Porter, University of Missouri; Peter Pringle, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga; Neal Robison, Washington State University; Linda Steiner, Rutgers University; and Don Tomlinson, Texas A & M University.

I've written text and trade books for a number of different publishers, and each experience, although different, has been rewarding. The professionals at Mayfield, while the technical equals of the best I have known over 30 years of writing, surpass all others in their unfailing good humor, kindness, and individual charm. My editor, Holly Allen, waited for me to *want* to write this book. If I had known how skilled a colleague and delightful a friend she would be, I would have been ready years sooner. Mayfield's developmental editors also contributed to the book. Kate Engelberg brought an enviable intellectual and stylistic sharpness to my work. Susan Shook Malloy and Star MacKenzie did an admirable job bringing together the supplements package. My production editor, Carla White Kirschenbaum, was always ready to help me and prod me when necessary. My copy editor, Deborah Fogel, further refined the text. Credit for the imaginative visual look of this book goes to three talented people, photo researcher Brian Pecko, art director Jeanne Schreiber, and art editor Robin Mouat. Their graphic ideas helped make my writing easier to understand.

Finally, my most important inspiration throughout the writing of this book has been my daughter, Simmony, whose simple existence requires that I consider and reconsider what kind of world we will leave for her. I've written this text in the hope that it helps make the future for her and her friends better than it might otherwise have been.

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