

Mass Communication

Living in a Media World

RALPH E. HANSON



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MASS COMMUNICATION: LIVING IN A MEDIA WORLD

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To Pam, Erik, and Andrew

About the Author

RALPH E. HANSON is an associate professor of journalism at West Virginia University, where he has taught since 1993. For nearly a decade, he has taught Introduction to Mass Communication as a large lecture class (300+ students), a small lecture/discussion (35 students), and a writing-intensive online course. He has also taught newswriting, editorial writing, and media ethics. Hanson has a bachelor's degree in journalism and anthropology from Iowa State University, a master's degree in journalism from Iowa State, and a doctorate in sociology from Arizona State University. Before moving to West Virginia, he was on the journalism faculty at Northern Arizona University. His research interests include journalism of the American West, journalistic portrayal of wildland fires, and distance education; he recently published an article on Wallace Stegner. In his spare time he enjoys going to his children's concerts and sporting events, reading travel books, and riding his motorcycle.



Author photo by Joel Beeson

Preface

So many of the defining moments of our lives come from our experience with the media. It could be history in the making as witnessed through television, the songs of our youth on the radio, the movie you went to on a first date, or accusations of presidential misconduct on the front page of the newspaper. Then there are the myriad trivial aspects of everyday life that come from our time with the media: the perfect pair of Levis found in a magazine ad, the Budwiser frogs and lizards, or arguments about college football rankings on the Internet.

For my generation, it was the moonwalk. Parents all across America let their nine-year-olds stay up way past their bedtimes to watch on television the biggest show of their lives—Neil Armstrong setting foot on the moon. For the last several years, my wife's beginning journalism students invariably have been writing that their first awareness of the news came on January 28, 1986, when they were sitting in a grade school classroom watching the launch, and subsequent explosion, of the space shuttle *Challenger*, carrying the first teacher-in-space, Christa McAuliffe. On September 11, 2001, my fifth-grade son and his classmates sat mesmerized by the horrors unfolding on the screen that day as the airplanes crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in southwest Pennsylvania. Some parents questioned whether their children ought to have watched this, but my son said, "We begged the teacher to keep the TV on. We had to know."

A 1998 study conducted by Fairfield Research suggests that Americans spend nearly 70 percent of their waking hours in contact with one mass medium or another. The media are a central aspect of our lives in the United States, yet we worry about the influence these institutions are having on us.

When I got my first job as a college professor, I was teaching a course in media effects. On the first day of class, a student raised his hand and asked, "When do we get to the part where we talk about how television turns people into zombies?" His question has stayed with me through the years because it represents the view of many people about the media. The student's attitude is one that has been fostered by media critics who start with an agenda of one sort or another—getting elected to office, getting a regulation approved, promoting a product, or even pushing a moral choice. I have long taken the view that the successful study of mass communication is also a journey of self-awareness. We are students of media and also players in a media world.

This book takes the perspective that the media in our world are not isolated institutions that somehow "do something" to us; rather, they are a central part of how we live, work, and play. The media are not an outside influence; they are a part of who we are. To achieve this, key topics including diversity, media effects, and ethics are incorporated within the book as a whole, rather than only being isolated in boxes or as separate chapters. As a first edition, *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* has also given me the opportunity to fully integrate 21st-century issues into the text in a way that older books could not. Issues such as consolidation of ownership, the rise of interactivity in all media, and the importance of the Internet are integral to every chapter. The book is also technology

savvy, assimilating the presence of digital media into the text as seamlessly and boldly as these same media have permeated our daily lives.

My own students have told me over the years that they remember information better if presented in a narrative form. The storytelling style of the book will help motivate students to do the reading and facilitate their recall of the material. The Building Media Literacy Skills exercises at the end of each chapter are based on writing assignments I've used both in the large-lecture version of my class and a writing-intensive online version. These exercises connect the material from the book to the media that students use in their everyday lives, and students often report that these assignments lead them to reassess how they experience the media.

About This Book

From books to digital cable, the pervasiveness of mass communication in our daily lives complicates our ability to understand the media's rich history of technical, cultural, sociological, political, economic, and artistic achievements. *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* reveals the forces that drive the industry while at the same time motivating the reader to exercise critical skills as consumers of media. It uses compelling stories and examples drawn from everyday life. The reader is encouraged to think about the media industry from the inside out and in so doing explore the many dimensions of mass communication that operate in our society.

Four major goals are at the heart of this book:

1. *To give students a personal look at the stories behind the images we see in the media.* *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* works at personalizing the media by putting faces on the seemingly faceless institutions. We see the global reach of media through the haunted eyes of author Jon Krakauer, who experienced life, death, and relentless international media attention during a disastrous climb to the top of Mount Everest in 1996. We see daily journalism from September 11, 2001, by following Associated Press photographer Richard Drew, who looked up that morning and photographed the men and women falling from the World Trade Center towers. Why did he take those heartbreaking pictures, and how did taking the photos affect him? Former radio reporter John Hockenberry discusses his fears about interviewing people from his wheelchair, and how he came to realize that people want to talk and tell their stories. These are not isolated anecdotes designed to amuse the reader. Instead, they lead students into the media world to better understand what media are doing. For example, in Chapter 15, Media Ethics: Truthfulness, Fairness and Standards of Decency, the Richard Drew 9/11 photo story is used to present the major ethical principles of journalism.
2. *To integrate coverage of effects, diversity and ethics.* Media effects, diversity, and ethics are central themes of *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World*, and as such are too important to be isolated in a single chapter. The book does not have a chapter on media effects; instead, following an introduction to media effects in Chapter 1, they are discussed in each chapter in the section on the

cultural significance of a particular medium. Diversity in the media is covered in two ways—by discussing the importance of women and minorities on the business side of the media, and by looking at the roles the media have played in social change. For example Chapter 5, *Newspapers: Reflection of a Democratic Society*, has sections devoted to minority, gay, and alternative newspapers; Chapter 7, *The Recording Industry: Music Everywhere*, looks at how rock and roll brought black and white music traditions together; and Chapter 9, *Television: Broadcast and Beyond*, looks at alternative cable and broadcast channels, including Univision, the nation's fifth largest broadcast network, and cable network Black Entertainment Television. Finally, although there is a freestanding chapter on media ethics, many of the chapters also deal with ethical dilemmas faced by the media. The issues of effects, diversity, and ethics also receive extensive coverage in Chapter 1, *The Media Business: Consolidation, Globalization, and Synergy*, and Chapter 14, *Politics, Media, and the Public*.

3. *To take students on a cultural tour of the media world in which we live.* The media world is not something that sprang into being overnight, nor is it something that is controlled by some anonymous and ultimately threatening “them.” Instead, it is a collection of institutions that have developed over the last 500 to 600 years. This book touches on keystones in the history of mass media to show how society and the media have evolved together to produce the world in which we now live. For example, the chapter on advertising looks at how the level of advertising grew in concert with the rise of transportation, manufactured goods, and national magazines. The book also looks at the role the media have played in social change. For example, the chapter on public relations has a section examining how civil rights leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used public relations techniques in the 1950s and 60s to further their cause. *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World* also recognizes the global nature of the media by looking at the international corporations that own the media; examining transnational media, such as satellite broadcasting and the Internet; and discussing how different cultures have different ideals for how the media ought to function. For example, Chapter 14, *Politics, Media, and the Public*, looks at the role that “small media,” such as newsletters, faxes and websites, play in the highly controlled Middle East media environment, while Chapter 13, *Media Law: Free Speech and Fairness*, examines differing protections of privacy throughout Europe.
4. *To help students develop their media literacy.* With the pervasiveness of the mass media, it is critical that students have a clear understanding of what the media are, who controls the media, how media content is selected, why the media behave the way they do, and how society and the media interact. This book looks at media literacy in terms of the messages, the media themselves, the media's owners, and audience members. For example, although there is a single chapter devoted to the development of the Internet as our newest mass medium, there is material in every chapter on how the Internet is transforming traditional media and their support industries. The book also challenges many of the common myths about the media, including the invention of the

Internet (the basic idea was developed in both the United States and Britain for very different purposes), a uniform journalistic bias (there are at least three distinct biases), and subliminal advertising (the idea was based on a fraudulent study).

Organization

The book is organized into five parts, each examining five critical dimensions that comprise the world of mass communication.

Part I, Introduction to the Media, presents the institutions and business of the media. The Introduction for the Student, Communication in a Media World and Chapter 1, "Living in a Media World," discuss the communication process, the development of mass communication, and the concept of media literacy. Chapter 2, "The Media Business: Consolidation, Globalization & Synergy," looks at how the media developed as a business in the United States, and then takes a unique in-depth look at each of the world's six biggest media companies.

Part II, Print Media, looks at the paper-oriented print media. Chapter 3, "Books: The Birth of the Mass Media," examines the development of mass literacy and mass communication, as well as the development and influence of print. Chapter 4, "Magazines: The Power of Words and Images," covers the many types of specialized magazines as well as looking at female and male body image, the conflict between advertisers and editorial content, and controversial teen magazines. Chapter 5, "Newspapers: Reflection of a Democratic Society," not only looks at the role of newspapers in democracy but also considers their entertainment functions and the relevance of newspapers in the information age.

Part III, Electronic Media, covers the media of sound and motion. Chapter 6, "Radio: Communication Without Boundaries," looks at the incredible power of radio broadcasting to cross barriers, bring music and entertainment into the home and car, and evoke passions through talk. Chapter 7, "The Recording Industry: Music Everywhere," takes a somewhat different structure than the rest of the media chapters. Following a section on the development of the recording industry, the chapter moves into sections on the racial integration of music and the role of the music in the lives of young people. Chapter 8, "Movies: Mass Producing Entertainment," looks at the continual conflict between the movie industry, its varied audiences, and the desire of different groups to control the content of the movies. It also looks at how digital technology is changing the production, financing, and promotion of movies. Chapter 9, "Television: Broadcast and Beyond," looks at television as two distinct media—broadcast and cable/satellite. Among the topics covered in the chapter are concerns about diversity of television content, control of the industry, and the influence of television on society. Chapter 10, "The Internet: Mass Communication Gets Personal," looks at the revolutionary new medium that is now reaching the majority of American homes. The focus of this chapter is on how the Internet makes use of virtually every level of communication.

Part IV, Supporting the Media, covers the advertising and public relations industries. Chapter 11, “Advertising: Selling a Message,” explains how advertising, national media, and nationally available products all evolved together, the elements of the advertising process, and the roles advertising plays in a media society. Chapter 12, “Public Relations: Manufacturing the News,” looks at the symbiotic relationship between the news and public relations industry.

Part V, Controlling the Media, looks at the institutions, conventions, and rules that regulate and control the media in the United States and around the world. Chapter 13, “Media Law: Free Speech and Fairness,” looks at the development and power of the laws that regulate the communication industry in the United States. Chapter 14, “Politics, Media and the Public,” examines not only the role the media play in the operation of a democratic society but also how other societies around the world control and use their media for political communication. Chapter 15, “Media Ethics: Truthfulness, Fairness & Standards of Decency,” discusses the basic philosophical underpinnings of media and journalistic ethics. It then goes on to look at how these principles apply to the news, entertainment, advertising and public relations industries.

Most of the chapters about the individual print or electronic media are organized around the same basic structure. Following an opening vignette and chapter timeline come three major sections:

- The first section looks at how the medium developed along with American society and culture. More than a history of the medium, this section looks at how societal, cultural, and technological elements came together to create the medium we have today.
- The second section looks at how the medium operates within the business and social world. This section looks at why the media behave the way they do within our economy.
- The third section looks at current issues and controversies between the medium and society. This often includes issues surrounding media effects, such as the concern about the influence of fashion magazines on young women’s body image, or the influence of rock and rap lyrics on listeners.

Special Features of the Text

Learning Objectives

Each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives. Goals for each chapter help students organize their reading and focus on key concepts.

Chapter-Opening Vignettes

Chapters open with an intriguing story about people in the media. Drawn from newsworthy events, these accounts provide a powerful narrative thread exemplifying the major themes of each chapter. They convey the excitement and relevance of media studies and critical inquiry by way of those whose lives have been profoundly affected by the media. For example, the opening vignette in Chapter 3,

"Books: The Birth of the Mass Media," tells the story of how mega-author Stephen King nearly dumped his first novel, *Carrie*, in the garbage. Chapter 9's "Television: Broadcast and Beyond" recounts how Ted Turner helped reinvent the television industry through the successful development of his cable channels. The influence of filmmaker Spike Lee on the advertising industry is profiled in Chapter 11, "Advertising: Selling a Message."

Chapter Timelines

The history of mass media is an engaging storyline that defines the industry. Major events in the development of mass communication are summarized in a timeline in each chapter and placed within the context of other major historical dates. This approach allows students to integrate their knowledge of world history with parallel development of mass media. The timelines preview important dates in mass media history that are detailed elsewhere in a chapter.

Sparkling Debate

Sparkling Debate boxes in the margins of each chapter inspire discussion about controversial media issues. They pose questions intended to stimulate students' imagination and foster the exchange of ideas.

Weblinks

The Weblinks boxes, which give URLs for topics and Internet sites mentioned in the text, are set in the margins for visibility and easy access.

Key Terms

I have paid particular attention to presenting understandable and accurate definitions of all key terms. These boldface terms are defined in the margins. Furthermore, a list of key terms—with page references—comes at the end of each chapter to make them easy to locate at a later time. Finally, the comprehensive Glossary at the end of the book includes the definitions of all of the textbook's key terms.

Media Literacy Boxes

The Media Literacy boxes, which appear in all chapters, shed additional light on the business and practice of mass media, enabling students to think more critically as informed consumers. How solid is the wall between "church and state" in the newsroom of a major news organization? What do record producers contribute to music? How does one measure the biggest movie of all time? These are the kinds of interesting questions posed by Media Literacy boxes throughout the book.

Global Perspectives Boxes

The Global Perspectives boxes, which appear in most chapters, examine how media operate around the world. These boxes are designed to expose students the truly worldwide influence of mass media and the way in which it is practiced around the globe. For example, students can read about the enormously successful rise of Bollywood—India's homegrown movie industry—in Chapter 8, "Movies: Mass-Producing Entertainment." In Chapter 11, "Advertising: Selling a

Message,” learn how an Italian clothing manufacturer used such themes as communism and cannibalism to launch its brand. The factors that affect the success or failure of an American business venture when it goes to China, as in the case of Disney, are featured in the Global Perspectives box in Chapter 2, “The Media Business: Consolidation, Globalization and Synergy.”

Media People Boxes

Individuals who have greatly influenced the development of mass media are profiled in the Media People boxes. Students can learn about the exploits and achievements of such notables as fantasy author J. R. R. Tolkien (Chapter 3), *Life* magazine photographer Margaret Bourke-White (Chapter 4), Motown Records founder Berry Gordy Jr. (Chapter 7), influential self-proclaimed movie critic Harry Knowles of Ain’t It Cool News (Chapter 8), and fashion designer Calvin Klein (Chapter 15).

Chapter Summary

Each chapter concludes with a brief recap of important points to assist students in reviewing important themes, events, and concepts.

Building Media Literacy Skills

Having students apply critical thinking skills to the mass media is a key goal of this book. To facilitate this, each chapter concludes with two thought-provoking exercises called Building Media Literacy Skills. Students are asked to analyze media content and behavior in critical writing assignments.

Electronic Resources

Each chapter concludes with an integrated set of media-related activities utilizing the student CD-ROMs and website developed especially for this text.

References

A comprehensive list of references is organized by chapter at the conclusion of the book.

Integrated Learning System

The text, its accompanying CD-ROM, and the Online Learning Center website work together as an integrated learning system to bring the history, theories, assessment, and basic concepts of mass communication to life. Offering a combination of print, multimedia, and Web-based materials, this comprehensive system meets the needs of instructors and students with a variety of teaching and learning styles.

For Students

Each chapter of the text is supported by unique supplementary material located at the accompanying Internet Online Learning Center website for the book www.mhhe.com/hanson) and on the Media World student CD-ROM. The Electronic Resources section at the end of each chapter directs students to additional content created specifically for this book.

The Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/hanson) includes:

- Internet Exercises and Self-Quizzes.
- Additional Readings for each chapter.
- A PowerWeb database of online articles.

The Media World CD-ROM includes:

- Media Tours videos, providing an inside look at the day-to-day operations of real media organizations.
- Media Talk videos, featuring newsworthy interviews about important developments in mass media from the NBC News Archives.

For Instructors

Additional electronic resources have been developed specifically for the instructor, including:

- Instructor's Resource CD-ROM featuring:
 - Instructor's Manual
 - Computerized Test Bank
 - PowerPoint Presentations featuring lecture points and graphics following the precise chapter structure of the book.
- Instructor's Section on the Online Learning Center (www.mhhe.com/hanson).
- Media Tours videotape edition. This VHS tape features the same profiles of real media companies that are included on the student CD-ROM. The videotape is provided so that instructors may use the clips in class.
- Media Talk Lecture Launcher videotape. This VHS tape features the same newsworthy interviews from the NBC News archives that are included on the student CD-ROM. The videotape is provided so that instructors may use the clips in class.

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Ralph E. Hanson

Guided Tour >>>

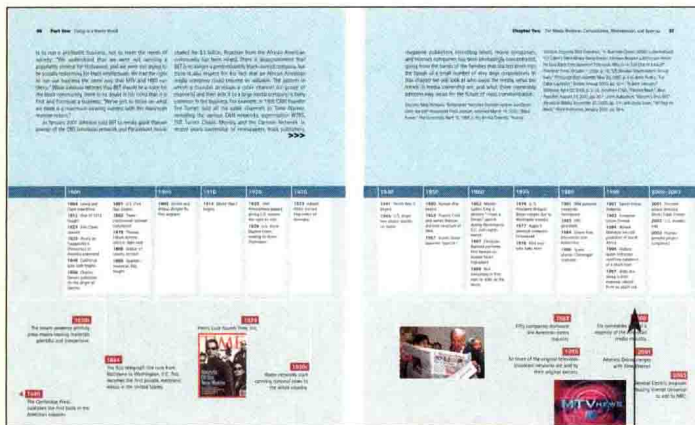
Interactive features of the text bring clarity to key issues and engage the reader in critical thinking activities. Pages are easy to scan for study and review.

Opening Vignettes

Chapters open with an intriguing story about people in the media. Drawn from newsworthy events, these accounts provide a powerful narrative thread exemplifying the major themes of each chapter.

Learning Objectives

Goals for each chapter help you organize your reading and focus on key concepts.



Timelines

Major events in the development of mass communication are summarized in timelines and placed within the context of major historical events. The timelines preview important dates in mass media history that are detailed in the chapter.

Running Glossary

Key terms are defined in the margins on pages where terms first appear in the book.