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新闻传播学英文原版教材系列

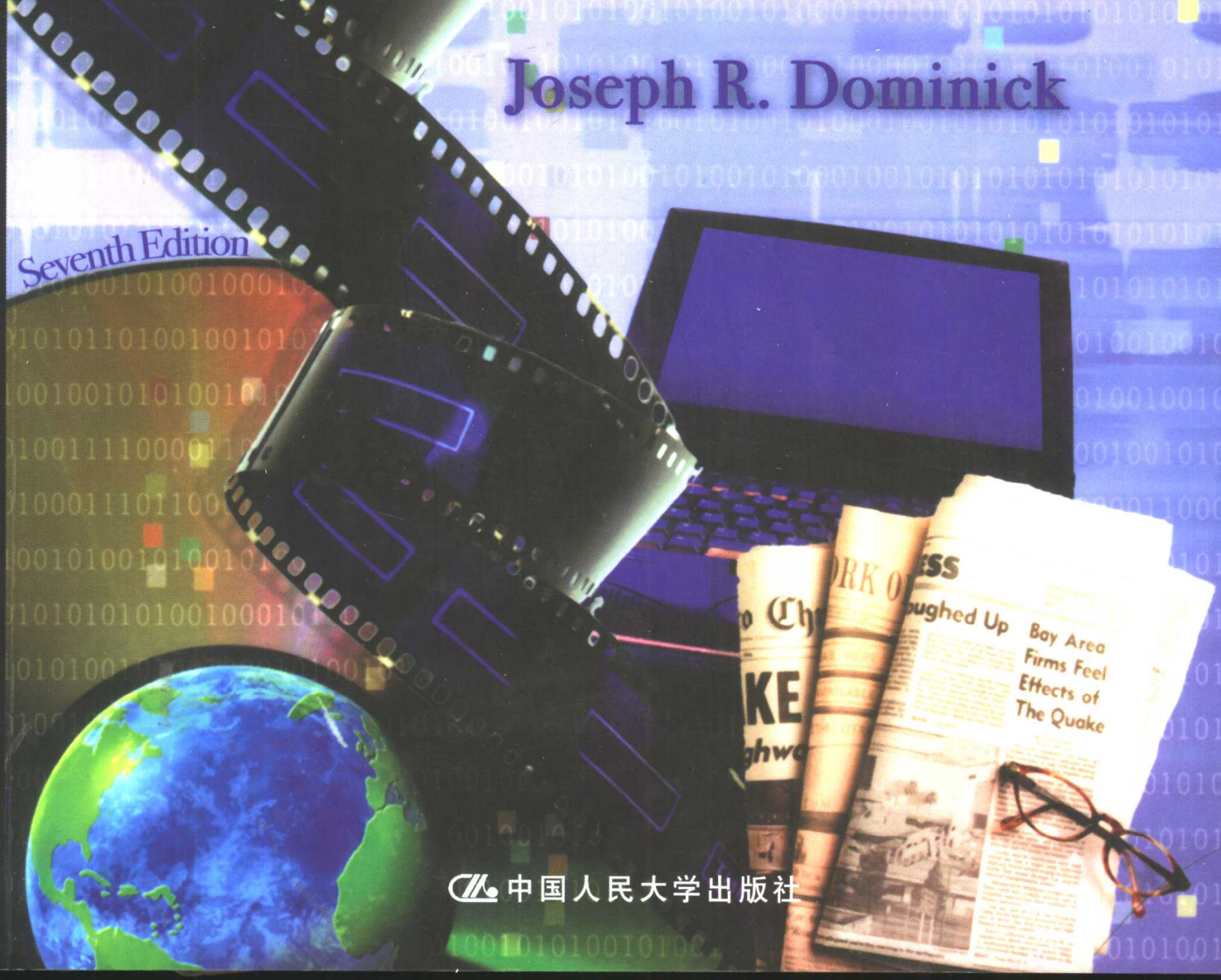
大众传播动力学
数字时代的媒介
第七版

The Dynamics of Mass Communication

Media in the Digital Age

Joseph R. Dominick

Seventh Edition



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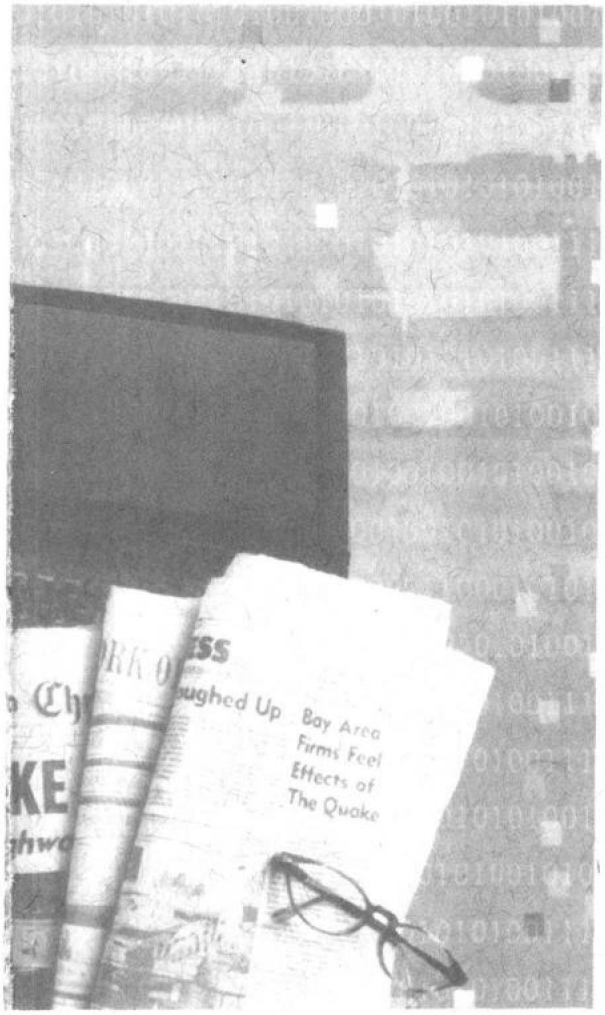
约瑟夫·R·多米尼克 著



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出 版 说 明

近年来，我国新闻传播学教学水平不断提高，但与发达国家相比，还是有一定差距。当今世界，全球化趋势势不可当，这一点在大众传播媒介上体现得极为明显。2001年中国加入WTO，更要求新闻传播学教育能够及时、全面、深入地反映国内外学界和业界的动态，尽快拉近与世界先进水平的差距。如今，广大教师和学生已不满足于仅仅阅读国外优秀教材的翻译版，他们迫切希望能读到原汁原味的原版教材。为了能尽快了解和吸收国外新闻传播学的最新研究成果，提高我国新闻传播学的教学研究和实际工作的水平，中国人民大学出版社选取了美国著名大学新闻传播学院长期选用的经典教材进行原文影印。

本丛书所选的图书均系美国新闻传播界有影响的大学教授所著，内容涵盖了新闻传播学的各个重要领域，全面反映了美国新闻传播学领域的理论研究水平和实践探索水平，因而受到了美国及世界各地的新闻传播学院师生、新闻从业人员的普遍欢迎，其中大部分版本都多次再版，影响深远，历久不衰，成为新闻传播学的经典教材。

本丛书在原汁原味地引进英文原版图书的同时，将目录和作者简介译为中文，作为对原版的一种导读，供读者阅读时参考。在这套英文原版影印丛书之后，中国人民大学出版社还将陆续推出它们的中文翻译版，广大读者可以对照阅读，相信收获会更大。

本丛书在图书选择和论证过程中，得到了中国人民大学新闻传播学院院长郭庆光教授和上海外国语大学新闻传播学院张咏华教授的大力支持和帮助，中国青年政治学院新闻系展江教授对目录的翻译进行了审校工作，在此谨向他们一并致以敬意和衷心的感谢。

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2003年4月

作者简介

约瑟夫·R·多米尼克(Joseph R. Dominick)在伊利诺伊大学(University of Illinois)获得学士学位,于1970年在密歇根州立大学(Michigan State University)获得哲学博士学位。他在纽约市立大学(City University of New York)女王学院(Queens College)执教四年。此后他任教于佐治亚大学(University of Georgia)的新闻与大众传播学院(College of Journalism and Mass Communication),其间从1980年至1985年,担任广播电视电影组(Radio-TV-Film Sequence)的负责人。除了《大众传播动力学》(*The Dynamics of Mass Communication*),多米尼克博士还写了其他三本书,并在学术期刊上发表了30多篇论文。从1976年到1980年,多米尼克博士担任了《广播学报》(*Journal of Broadcasting*)的编辑。他获得了来自全国广播公司协会(National Association of Broadcasters)与美国广播公司(American Broadcasting Company)的研究资助,并担任诸如罗伯特·伍德·约翰逊基金会(Robert Wood Johnson Foundation)以及美国化学学会(American Chemical Society)等机构的顾问。

The Dynamics of Mass Communication

MEDIA IN THE DIGITAL AGE, 7th Edition

Joseph R. Dominick
University of Georgia, Athens

For Meaghan and for Carole

About the Author

Joseph R. Dominick received his undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois and his Ph.D. from Michigan State University in 1970. He taught for four years at Queens College of the City University of New York before coming to the College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia where, from 1980 to 1985, he served as head of the Radio-TV-Film Sequence. Dr. Dominick is the author of three books in addition to *The Dynamics of Mass Communication* and has published more than 30 articles in scholarly journals. From 1976 to 1980, Dr. Dominick served as editor of the *Journal of Broadcasting*. He has received research grants from the National Association of Broadcasters and from the American Broadcasting Company and has consulted for such organizations as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Chemical Society.

Preface

Previous adopters will notice something different about the seventh edition: It has a subtitle. The timing seemed right to add "Media in the Digital Age" to *The Dynamics of Mass Communication.*

I did a Google search for the term "digital age" and got back 295,000 hits, including such items as privacy in the digital age, art in the digital age, children in the digital age, scholars' information requirements in the digital age (I read that one carefully), archives in the digital age, culture in the digital age, antitrust in the digital age, matte painting in the digital age (?), dentistry in the digital age, Hootie and the Blowfish in the digital age. I could go on with another 294,991 examples, but I think I already made the point: There's something to this digital age thing.

BEING DIGITAL

Sometime between 1998 (when much of the sixth edition was written) and 2001 (when the seventh edition appears), the digital age came of age. Consider just a few of the events that transpired during this period:

- The number of American homes with computers passed the 50 percent mark.
- The number of regular Internet users increased to 100 million.
- Napster's digital music file-sharing program attracted more than 50 million users and shook up an entire industry.
- Stephen King and Elmore Leonard both wrote e-books designed for the online community.
- *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* was released in digital form.
- Two digital radio satellite companies announced plans to start a service for car radios.
- Digital AOL absorbed traditional Time Warner in a $183 billion deal.
- My cable company went digital, and now I have to pay an extra $4.95 per month for a converter. (Granted, this last event is not on the same level as AOL/Time Warner, but it hit closer to home.)

I have tried to make the seventh edition reflect these changes. Specifically:

- Chapter 1 includes a new model for studying mass communication that reflects the new reality of the Internet as mass communication.
- Chapter 1 also introduces the term "disintermediation," a neologism of the digital age with profound implications for mass communication.
- Chapter 3 has an expanded section describing the digital revolution. I have tried to explain it using Nicholas Negroponte's distinction between "atoms" and "bits."
- The chapters in Parts Two and Three (the "media" chapters) all have new sections detailing how each medium is dealing with the digital age.
- Chapter 8 contains a section on the impact of Napster on the sound-recording business.

- Chapter 11 ("The Internet and the World Wide Web") has been expanded and talks about broadband access, streaming video, Web TV, and e-commerce.
- The chapters in Part Four (the "media professions" chapters) contain extended treatment of how news reporting, advertising, and public relations are adapting to digital media.
- In all chapters I have tried to use examples that stress digital media.

BOX SCORE

As in past editions, the boxed inserts in each chapter provide background material, present further examples of topics mentioned in the text, and raise issues that students might think about or discuss. The seventh edition contains more than 80 revised or new boxed inserts. Also as in previous editions, I have kept the issue-oriented focus in constructing these inserts. More than 40 spotlight some kind of pertinent ethical, social, or critical/cultural issue. In addition, a new series of "Decision Makers" boxes features profiles of key figures in the various media whose choices have had a significant impact on the development of their industries.

MORE CRITICAL/CULTURAL

The sixth edition introduced the critical/cultural perspective to the *Dynamics of Mass Communication.* The seventh edition expands on this perspective by including four new or revised Critical/Cultural Issues boxes that illustrate the approach.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

In addition to the items mentioned above, the following are new to this edition:

- Parts Two and Three (the "media" chapters) contain a new section that briefly describes the defining features of each medium.
- The history sections in Parts Two and Three have been streamlined for easier reading.
- Chapter 15 has an extended discussion about copyright and the Internet.
- Chapter 16 uses the *Los Angeles Times*–Staples Center brouhaha to illustrate the workings of the ethical model presented at the beginning of the chapter.
- Chapter 18 includes a section on research about the social impact of the Internet.
- The questions at the end of each chapter are now divided into two sets. One set of questions reviews material in the chapter, while the other set encourages more critical thinking about topics raised in the chapter.

KEEPING IT CURRENT

As Bill Gates is fond of saying, "The Internet changes everything." That has been especially true for the mass media in the past couple of years. The task of bringing each chapter up to date was much more challenging because of the impact of the

net. Nonetheless, all chapters and tables have been revised to reflect the most recent information available at press time. Finally, the book has been given a sparkly new design in keeping with the digital age.

SOMETHING FAMILIAR

Past users of *Dynamics* will notice some continuity from the sixth to the seventh edition. The number of chapters remains the same, as does the book's organization. Further, the emphasis on media economics is maintained in the seventh edition. Media mergers, competition, convergence, and the bottom line are still important factors in understanding digital age media. In addition, the book's emphasis on the social impact of the media has been preserved. The concern over the media's effect on antisocial behavior, the controversy over media coverage of scandals involving public figures, and the media's role in the recent tumult surrounding the 2000 presidential election make this material crucial for students to know.

Once again (and it gets harder every time), I have tried to keep the writing style informal and conversational. As before, I have chosen many examples from popular culture that I hope all students are familiar with. Technical terms are boldfaced and defined in the Glossary. I have also included a number of charts, tables, and figures that I hope will aid understanding.

. . . IN A SUPPORTING ROLE

THE DOMINICK ONLINE LEARNING CENTER

www.mhhe.com/dominick

Including for the instructor:

- A teaching guide, incorporating all text supplements, written by Max V. Grubb, Southern Illinois University–Carbondale
- Detailed chapter summaries, written by Jerry Pinkham, College of Lake County
- PowerPoint slides for each chapter, also written by Professor Pinkham
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- Interactive web exercises, written by Steven J. Dick
- Practice tests
- Media timelines
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Each new book comes with a PowerWeb passcard to a website made available in partnership with Dushkin/McGraw-Hill, publisher of the popular *Annual Editions* series. The site includes:

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COMPUTERIZED TEST BANK

Written by Rebecca Ann Lind, University of Illinois at Chicago, this computerized test bank has all new questions that are now page referenced to the text. It is available in both Windows and Macintosh formats.

POWERPOINT SLIDES

Created by Jerry Pinkham, College of Lake County, these all new PowerPoint slides can be used by instructors in class presentations and by students for review. They are available in a variety of formats: on disk, on the Instructor's CD-ROM, and on the Online Learning Center.

INSTRUCTOR'S CD-ROM

This convenient to use CD-ROM was developed to facilitate class presentations. It includes:

- All instructor's resource material from the Online Learning Center
- The entire Test Bank
- Video clips keyed to the chapter outlines

VIDEO

Keyed directly to this text, the McGraw-Hill Mass Communication Video is 14 concept videos compiled onto one videotape. Each segment is approximately 10 minutes in length. The segments are (1) The Newest Mass Communication Medium; (2) Modern Mass Communication: Bringing Us Together or Keeping Us Apart? (3) The Impact of Television; (4) The Global Network; (5) Are Books Going to Become Obsolete? (6) Newspapers: Developing to Compete in a Media-Rich

World; (7) The Movie Business; (8) The Cultural Impact of Film; (9) Radio: A Miraculous New Medium; (10) The Business of Making It in the Recording Industry; (11) Television Broadcasting Takes Off; (12) Advertising: Always with Us; (13) How Free Is the Press? (14) A Right to Know?

Additional videos are available from your McGraw-Hill sales representative.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once again, I would like to thank all the students and instructors who have used the first six editions of this book and who were kind enough to suggest improvements. Your feedback was greatly appreciated. Several colleagues deserve special mention: Drs. Carolina Alzura, Vince Benigni, Keisha Hoerrner, and Patrica Priest provided special material for this edition as did doctoral student Rita Van Sant. Dr. Lynn Sallot provided details about public relations and Dr. James Weaver of Virginia Polytechnic was kind enough to help me understand his experiments. An extra special thank you to Dr. Rebecca Ann Lind at the University of Illinois at Chicago for her close reading of the text and her suggestions for improvement. Professor Lind was also kind enough to provide the provocative, insightful, and thoughtful questions that appear in the Critical/Cultural boxed inserts. Her efforts went way beyond the call of duty and I deeply appreciate them. In addition, thanks to graduate student Doowang Lee for his Internet research; thanks to Cheryl Christopher for her help with logistics; thanks to Meaghan Dominick for her knowledge of popular music; and a particular thanks to Carole Dominick for her help with photography, the index, and for putting up with my whining during the revision process.

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Finally, at the risk of making this section sound like an Oscar acceptance speech, a big thank you to the talented folks at McGraw-Hill who worked so hard on this project: to Valerie Raymond, for her thorough professionalism, keen insight, intelligent suggestions, unwavering enthusiasm for the project, clever caption writing, and for tolerating my somewhat warped sense of humor; to Phil Butcher, for continuing to support the book; to Kelly May for her marketing efforts; to Christina Thornton-Villagomez for once again flawlessly handling all the details; to Corrine Johns for digging up all the neat photos; to Jennifer Van Hove for capturing all the screen captures; and to Keith McPherson, whose design concept made the book look spiffy.

In closing, I'll repeat what I said in the six prior editions (I can't find anything better to say). The media are a vital force in our society; I hope this book helps us understand them even better.

Joseph R. Dominick

Your ~~Guided~~ Tour

Television

It might be surprising to some to discover that one of the defining moments of modern television occurred on "The Drew Carey Show." The November 17, 1999, episode of the popular sitcom started off with Mimi Bobeck, Drew Carey's nemesis, looking into the camera and saying, "Hey, all you geeks out there. Both hands on the keyboard!" This rather peculiar line inaugurated one of the most enterprising examples of the convergence between television and the Internet. It was the first time a large-scale, streaming video webcast was used to enhance and expand the content of a prime-time, network television show.

Like "The Drew Carey Show," the quiz show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" also uses the Internet to enhance the viewing experience. (Newsmakers/Lisa Rose/Agency)

Audience members for the segment, entitled "Drew-Cam," were encouraged to put their computers near their television sets. Those that visited the website for the show were treated to material not available to those watching TV. The storyline for the episode involved Carey's agreeing to have webcams installed in his apartment. Although there was some overlap with the televised version, web viewers saw some scenes the TV audience didn't. In one segment, while Drew is at work, the webcams show his dog letting neighborhood mutts into his kitchen for a party. In another, Ed McMahon drops by with a $10 million check but leaves when he finds no one is at home. The experiment was a success. The website received a record 13 million clicks.

The "Drew Carey" experiment may have been the most visible example of TV and Internet convergence, but it is certainly not the only one. There is a web counterpart to "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" in which web surfers play along with the show. ESPN.com synchronizes some of its content with ABC's "Monday Night Football" broadcast. The National Basketball Association (NBA) combines a special satellite-delivered NBA channel with complementary content from the NBA website.

The most important word in the above paragraphs is "convergence." Although people have been talking about

MEDIA PROBE Ethel L. Payne

When Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, he invited leaders of the Civil Rights movement to join him in the Oval Office. Only one woman was among the group that witnessed the historic moment—Ethel L. Payne, an African-American journalist who had reported on civil rights for more than a decade.

Ethel L. Payne was the granddaughter of slaves. She originally wanted to become a lawyer but was denied admission to law school because of her race. In 1948, she went to Japan to work with African-American troops who were stationed there. Two years later Payne showed excerpts from her personal journal about the problems of black soldiers to a reporter for the *Chicago Defender* who was visiting Japan. Her stories became a series in the newspaper and launched Payne into a journalism career.

Based in Chicago, she was awards for her coverage of problems in the African-American community. She went to Washington in the mid-1950s to cover the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement. She wrote stories analyzing the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. Payne made her presence felt at White House press conferences when she asked President Dwight Eisenhower pointed questions about the lack of progress on civil rights during his administration.

In 1955, Payne covered the arrest of Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama, and the subsequent bus boycott. She reported the big stories of the Civil Rights movement, including the efforts to integrate the University of Alabama, the violence in Little Rock, Arkansas, the confrontation at Selma, Alabama, and the march on Washington in 1985. She was one of the first reporters to interview Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 1966, she traveled to Vietnam to cover African-American troops, who were involved in much of the fighting. She later accompanied Secretary of State Henry Kissinger on a six-nation tour of Africa. In 1978, at age 67, she ended her career with the *Chicago Defender* to write a syndicated column. Seven years later she became a leader in the effort to free South Africa leader Nelson Mandela.

Ethel Payne died in 1991. The *Washington Post* published a tribute to her on its editorial page. It praised her for being fair, straightforward, and independent, an assessment probably shared by her millions of readers.

- Splashy graphics and color.
- Short, easy-to-read stories.
- Lots of graphs, charts, and tables.
- Factoids (a *factoid* is a list of boiled-down facts—much like this list).

A somewhat controversial reporting philosophy surfaced in the mid-1990s. **Public journalism** (see Social Issues, "Public Journalism") embraces the view that newspapers should do more than just report the news; they should try to help communities solve problems and encourage participation in the political process. Some reporters think this philosophy exceeds the established tenets of journalism.

With the exception of the early 1990s, when a weak economy and a depressed advertising market caused several big-city papers to fold, the newspaper industry has enjoyed prosperity. By the late 1990s, layoffs, cost-cutting measures, and an increase in advertising revenue helped newspapers increase their profits.

The late 1990s also saw many newspapers start online editions. This trend continued into the new century as newspapers came to grips with the promises and pitfalls of the Internet.

NEWSPAPERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The newspaper industry is still experimenting to find the best way to incorporate an online presence with the traditional print editions. Fearful that online companies such as Yahoo! and Excite would use the web to steal away readers and advertising, many newspapers rushed to set up websites. The earliest newspaper sites were simply watered-down versions of the printed paper. They did little to promote the print version, nor did they generate enough revenue to pay for themselves. In short, for most papers, the website was simply a drain on finances and resources.

The Digital Age

All "media" chapters have new sections detailing how each medium is dealing with the digital age.

demand, however, publishers don't have to guess how many books they should print. They simply print one whenever somebody orders it. This eliminates all the expensive production and shipping costs and guarantees that no books will be returned unsold. Eliminating these costs and the guesswork involved in forecasting demand means that publishers can make money on a book that sells only a few hundred copies. This might open up the way for a multitude of special-interest books that would be too expensive to publish with the traditional method.

Moreover, a book title would never go out of print. It would be permanently stored somewhere on some hard drive or disk. Even the most esoteric or obscure titles could be easily accessed.

What Is a Book?

Finally, the digital age raises fundamental questions about what exactly constitutes a book. E-books could easily incorporate a sound track that plays while a person reads. Video clips that demonstrate how something works could be inserted into instruction books. Illustrations as lush as those done by monks during the Middle Ages are possible. The creative potential of e-books is still unexplored territory.

Does all this signal the death of the traditional paper-and-ink book? Probably not. People will still be drawn to the feel of books and the unique experience of reading paper pages bound between covers. Dick Brass, the executive in charge of Microsoft's e-book efforts, put it this way in a *Newsweek* article: "[Traditional] books will persist because they're beautiful and useful. They're like horses after the automobile—not gone but transformed into a recreational beast."

The rest of this chapter discusses the more concrete aspects of the book industry—its organization, ownership, production techniques, economics, and audiences. Keep in mind, however, that book publishing is in a state of transition as it quickly enters the digital age.

DEFINING FEATURES OF BOOKS

Books are the least "mass" of the mass media. It took about 40 years to sell 20 million copies of *Gone With the Wind*, but more than 50 million people watched the movie version in a single evening when it came to television. Even a flop TV show might have 10 million people in its audience, whereas a popular hardcover book might make the best-seller list with 125,000 copies sold. Even a mass-market paperback might sell only about 6 million copies.

Books, however, can have a cultural impact that far outweighs their modest audience size. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is credited with changing a nation's attitude toward slavery. Dr. Spock and his *Baby and Child Care* altered the way parents brought up their children and became the target of critics who blamed him and his methods for the social unrest of the 1960s. *Silent Spring* changed the nation's attitudes toward the environment.

Finally, books are the oldest and most enduring of the m
printed a book back in the 15th century. Public libraries have
dreds of years. Many individuals have extensive collections
home libraries. People throw away newspapers and magazi
ing them, but most save their books.

Defining Features

All "media" chapters also have new sections that briefly define features of each medium.

CRITICAL / CULTURAL ISSUES

Radio and the Local Community

The philosophy that guided the development of radio in the United States was based on localism. Radio stations were licensed to serve the public interest of those who could hear their signals. Stations were expected to be integral parts of their local communities and responsive to the needs of local residents. The Federal Radio Commission set aside a number of AM channels that were dedicated to lower-power stations serving a particular town. Over the years, other regulations were enacted that favored localism. To encourage the development of roots in the community, owners were required to hold on to stations for three years before they could be sold. Stations had to survey their listeners and ascertain the needs of their community and provide programs to address those needs. Caps were placed on the number of stations one company could own to discourage large corporations from becoming out-of-town station owners with little or no ties to the community. In an effort to assure access for many voices, there were further caps on the number of stations that could be owned in one market.

As pointed out by Charles Fairchild in his article "Deterritorializing Radio: Deregulation and the Continued Triumph of the Corporatist Perspective in the USA," which appeared in a 1999 issue of *Media, Culture and Society*, this localist philosophy is not much with us today. His analysis of changes in the radio industry over the past two decades is a good example of a critical/cultural investigation that focuses on ideology and power relationships in society.

In essence, Fairchild argues that recent changes have removed the connection between a radio station and its local community. He suggests that there were two dominant ideologies in force that competed as definitions of the "public interest." One, the statist position, conceives of government as the protector of the public interest and an agency that assures that the broadest number of people benefit from the medium. The other, the corporatist view, holds that the market is the best determiner of the public interest. The most economically successful service is the service that succeeds best in the marketplace. In other words, the public interest is what interests the public.

Fairchild notes that the corporatist view has been the dominant model in recent radio operations. Thanks in part to an active industry lobby and the economic power wielded by large communications corporation, recent changes have almost erased the notion of local service. Following are just a few of those changes: The three-year ownership rule has been dropped; the requirements for ascertaining the needs of the community have been minimized; and perhaps most importantly, the cap on the total number of stations that can be owned has been removed and the limit on the number of stations owned in a market has been raised to eight.

What were the effects of this change in ideology? The radio industry has become consolidated, with big corporations controlling hundreds of stations. Locally owned stations that had deep roots in the local community were gobbled up by big companies with headquarters in some faraway city and whose main interest was the bottom line. Consequently, local programming has been reduced in favor of standardized entertainment and news fed from some central location nowhere near the local community. Programming decisions are left to consultants and syndicators who have no local ties whatsoever. Hence, as Fairchild suggests, radio has become "deterritorialized," detached from a community connection.

Fairchild concludes that the corporatist ideology has triumphed: "local radio stations are the objects of unaccountable control from outside local communities and neither the government nor the public have any levers of power with which they can influence broadcasters to provide access to those voices which cannot gain any serious measure of volume elsewhere."

Read the Social Issues box on page 188 concerning efforts to increase diversity on the airwaves and see how the issues it raises fits in with Fairchild's analysis.

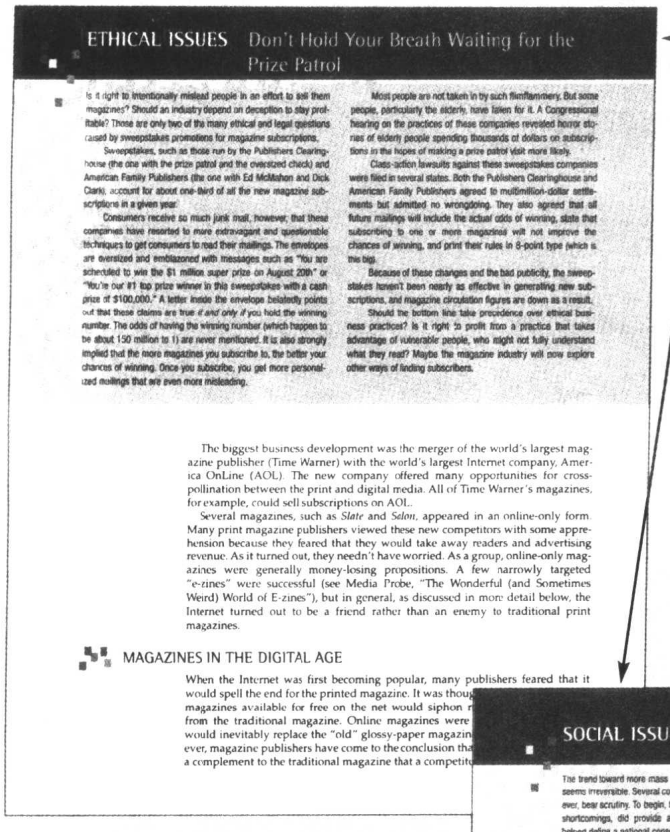
1. What effect might the Internet have on the amount of local news, information, and other services available in any given community? Might the Internet itself have any effect on the relevance or importance of the localism arguments?
2. If the government can deregulate radio, clearly radio could be re-regulated. What types of regulations would you like to see that would best serve the public interest, and where would you place the responsibility to ensure that citizens are indeed well-served by radio?
3. Who owns the radio stations in your home town? Compare formats, amount of news, community activities—how do the locally owned stations compare with those that are corporate-owned? Had you noticed a difference before thinking about it now for this class? Does it matter?

Critical/Cultural Issues

Critical/Cultural boxes carry the critical/cultural perspective, introduced in Chapter 2, throughout the text.

Issue Boxes

Theme boxes put the spotlight on ethical and social issues.



ETHICAL ISSUES Don't Hold Your Breath Waiting for the Prize Patrol

Is it right to intentionally mislead people in an effort to sell them magazines? Should an industry depend on deception to stay profitable? These are only two of the many ethical and legal questions raised by sweepstakes promotions for magazine subscriptions.

Sweepstakers, such as those run by the Publishers Clearinghouse (the one with the prize patrol and the oversized checks) and American Family Publishers (the one with Ed McMahon and Dick Clark), account for about one-third of all the new magazine subscriptions in a given year.

Consumers receive so much junk mail, however, that these companies have resorted to more extravagant and questionable techniques to get consumers to read their mailings. The envelopes are oversized and emblazoned with messages such as "You are scheduled to win the $1 million super prize on August 20th" or "You're our #1 top prize winner in this sweepstakes with a cash prize of $100,000." A letter inside the envelope belatedly points out that these claims are true *if and only if* you hold the winning number. The odds of having the winning number (which happen to be about 150 million to 1) are never mentioned. It is also strongly implied that the more magazines you subscribe to, the better your chances of winning. Once you subscribe, you get more personalized mailings that are even more misleading.

Most people are not taken in by such flimflammery. But some people, particularly the elderly, have fallen for it. A Congressional hearing on the practices of these companies revealed horror stories of elderly people spending thousands of dollars on subscriptions in the hopes of making a prize patrol visit more likely.

Class-action lawsuits against these sweepstakes companies were filed in several states. Both the Publishers Clearinghouse and American Family Publishers agreed to multimillion-dollar settlements but admitted no wrongdoing. They also agreed that all future mailings will include the actual odds of winning, state that subscribing to one or more magazines will not improve the chances of winning, and print their rules in 8-point type (which is this big).

Because of these changes and the bad publicity, the sweepstakes haven't been nearly as effective in generating new subscriptions, and magazine circulation figures are down as a result.

Should the bottom line take precedence over ethical business practices? Is it right to profit from a practice that takes advantage of vulnerable people, who might not fully understand what they read? Maybe the magazine industry will now explore other ways of finding subscribers.

The biggest business development was the merger of the world's largest magazine publisher (Time Warner) with the world's largest Internet company, America OnLine (AOL). The new company offered many opportunities for cross-pollination between the print and digital media. All of Time Warner's magazines, for example, could sell subscriptions on AOL.

Several magazines, such as *Slate* and *Salon*, appeared in an online-only form. Many print magazine publishers viewed these new competitors with some apprehension because they feared that they would take away readers and advertising revenue. As it turned out, they needn't have worried. As a group, online-only magazines were generally money-losing propositions. A few narrowly targeted "e-zines" were successful (see Media Probe, "The Wonderful (and Sometimes Weird) World of E-zines"), but in general, as discussed in more detail below, the Internet turned out to be a friend rather than an enemy to traditional print magazines.

MAGAZINES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

When the Internet was first becoming popular, many publishers feared that it would spell the end for the printed magazine. It was thou
magazines available for free on the net would siphon r
from the traditional magazine. Online magazines were
would inevitably replace the "old" glossy-paper magazin
ever, magazine publishers have come to the conclusion tha
a complement to the traditional magazine that a competit

SOCIAL ISSUES: Media Specialization: Gains and Losses

The trend toward more mass media and more specialized content seems irreversible. Several consequences of this movement, however, bear scrutiny. To begin, the traditional media, whatever their shortcomings, did provide a national agenda for society and helped define a national consensus. They focused the attention of the nation and mobilized its resources. The fireside chats of Franklin Roosevelt, for example, were credited with helping the country survive the hardships of the depression. Could such a phenomenon take place in the 21st century? Douglas Cater in a media critic who was among the first to question whether media specialization was beneficial to society. In a 1973 *Wall Street Journal* article, Cater posed the fundamental question: "What happens when each minority group listens to its own prophets? When there are no more Walter Cronkites each evening to reassure us that despite its afflictions the nation still stands?"

Mass communication scholar Wilson Dizard described the traditional mass media as a kind of social "Elmer's glue" that bound people together (see the discussions of "Linkage" and "Transmission of Values" in the next chapter). Communication researcher Glanys Gantley in a 1991 *Washington Quarterly* article speculates that the growth in the number of specialized and personalized media might have political repercussions. Increased access to a greater range of information could serve as a democratizing force, but there might be a downside: "[If] [s]pread to millions of individuals throughout the world, each literally following his or her own agenda, such power could remove the glue of social cohesion . . . Power to the people could mean that nobody is in control."

Neil Postman, in his provocative book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, suggests another troubling possibility. The proliferation of media and messages could result in a flood of trivialized content that distracts us from the key social issues of the day. We might, as his title suggests, amuse ourselves to death.

Although the following chapters discuss the various media individually, these media do not exist in a vacuum. In the future, we are likely to see more examples of the synergy that exists among all communication media.

Disintermediation

This rather ungraceful, tongue-twisting word refers to the process whereby access to a product or a service is given directly to the consumer, thus eliminating the intermediary, or "middleman," who might typically supply the product or service. The Internet and the World Wide Web have created a ubiquitous and easily accessible network where buyers and sellers make direct contact. The Internet has already provided several examples of **disintermediation.** Travelers bypass travel agents and book airline tickets directly online; traders bypass brokers and purchase stocks directly online; consumers bypass salespeople and buy insurance online. (Some businesses have more to fear from disintermediation than others. It's unlikely that consumers will bypass restaurants because of the Internet.)

Disintermediation is of obvious concern to mass media organizations. Those media that can easily be distributed over the Internet are the first to feel its effects. Take sound recording, for example: An artist can use the web to distribute a CD directly to the consumers via the net. The recording company, distributor, and retailer are no longer needed in the process. Or consider book publishing: An author can put a book directly on a website for readers to download, thereby bypassing publishing companies and bookstores altogether.

Other mass communication organizations, even though they may not have the immediate fears of the recording and publishing industries, will also have to face the implications of this phenomenon. For example, audience members can listen to radio on the web; local stations are no longer necessary. Before long, movie fans will be able to download current full-length films onto DVDs. Will motion picture theaters become obsolete? The chapters in Parts Two and Three of this book will have more to say about disintermediation and its impact on the various media.