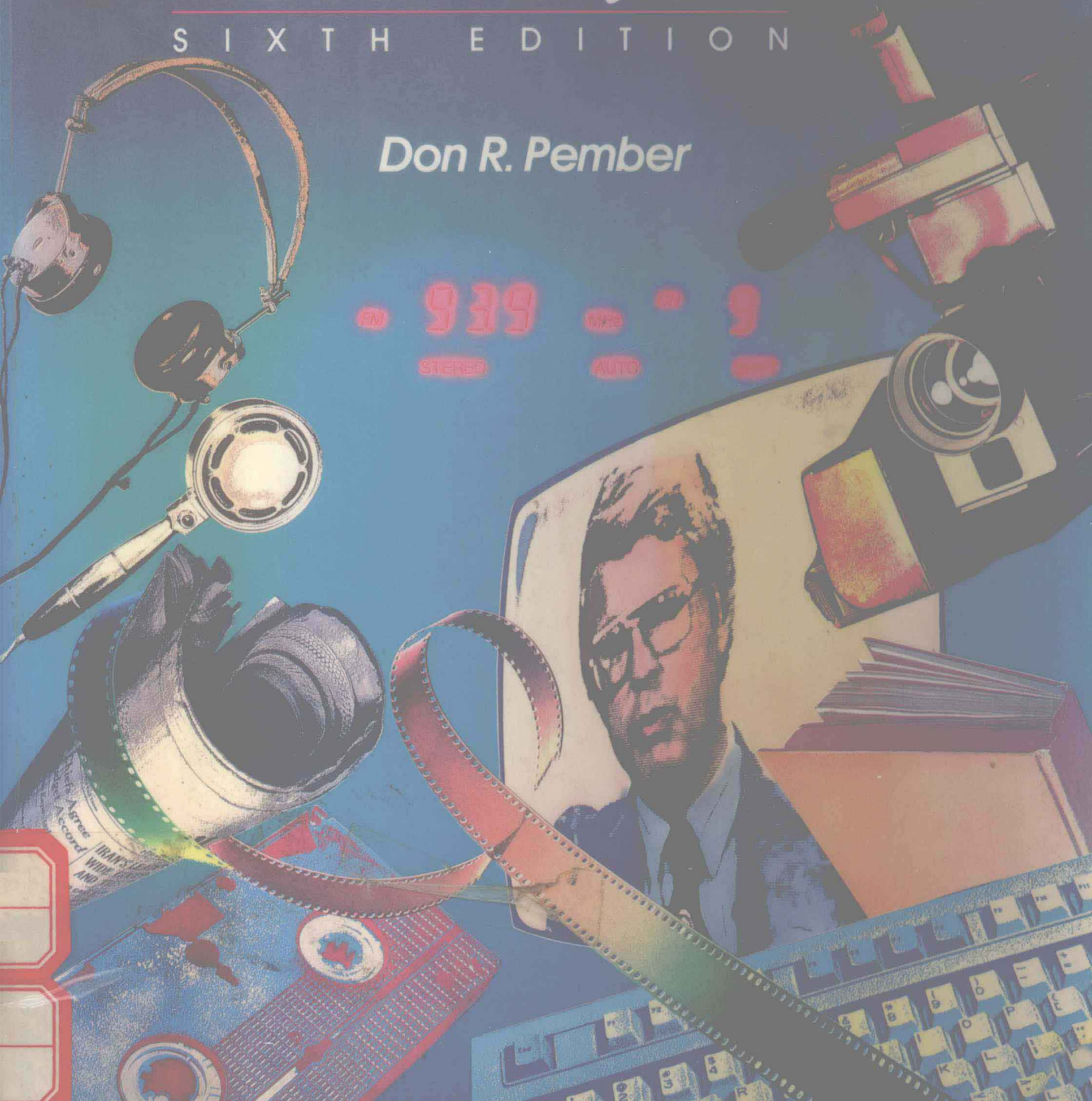


# MASS MEDIA IN AMERICA

S I X T H E D I T I O N

*Don R. Pember*





SIXTH EDITION

---

# ***MASS MEDIA IN AMERICA***



***Don R. Pember***

University of Washington

---

MACMILLAN PUBLISHING COMPANY  
New York



Editor: David Chodoff  
Production Supervisor: Linda Greenberg  
Production Manager: Pamela Kennedy Oborski  
Text and Cover Designer: Jane Edelstein  
Cover Photograph: Bill Longcore  
Photo Researchers: Chris Migdol/Diane Kraut  
Illustrations: Precision Graphics

This book was set in Souvenir Light by The Clarinda Co., and was printed and bound by Von Hoffmann Press, Inc. The cover was printed by Von Hoffmann Press, Inc.

Copyright © 1992 by Macmillan Publishing Company, a division of Macmillan, Inc.

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the Publisher.

Earlier editions copyright © 1974, 1977, 1981, and 1983 by Science Research Associates, Inc.; copyright © 1987 by Macmillan Publishing Company.

Macmillan Publishing Company  
866 Third Avenue, New York, New York 10022

Macmillan Publishing Company is part of the Maxwell Communication Group of Companies.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Pember, Don R., 1939-  
Mass Media in America / Don R. Pember.—6th ed.  
p. cm.  
Includes bibliographical references and index.  
ISBN 0-02-393780-7 (pbk.)  
1. Mass media—United States. I. Title.  
P92.U5P4 1992  
302.23'0973—dc20 91-11193  
CIP

Printing: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Year: 2 3 4 5 6 7 8



# **PREFACE**

Perhaps no nation in the history of mankind has enjoyed a communication system equal to the one that currently exists in the United States. It must be regarded as one of the technological marvels of the modern world. It is a multifaceted system of interpersonal and mass communication elements, and some parts of the network touch virtually everyone in the nation.

This book is about one important aspect of that communication system, the mass media—their historical and economic foundations, their organization, their strengths, and their weaknesses. The mass media in America play a vital role in maintaining civilization for a nation of 250 million people. While this book is largely descriptive, it is analytical as well, and the analysis is founded on the author's strongly held contention that in this society at least, we have a right to expect more from those who operate our system of mass communication than from those who make our automobiles or frozen TV dinners. The press—the mass media—after all, is the only enterprise mentioned in the U.S. Constitution. Those who constructed our system of government shielded the mass media from interference by the government, interference that is not uncommon in other industries or in other nations. This shield was put in place because the architects of our system of government believed that the press played a vital role in the nation, a role too important to be endangered by even a well-meaning government.

A modern society has many critical needs, including education, health care, banking, insurance, police and fire protection, a postal system, and a communications system. Yet of all institutions erected to meet these needs and many others, the mass communication system is the only one that is not operated or heavily regulated by the government. It is a system that is largely directed by private enterprise.

A communication system must meet various needs for society to survive and prosper. At the very least we need a communication system that can service our capitalistic, goods-oriented economic system; that can provide the information needed for members of the society to adjust constantly their relationship with a changing environment; that can present the members of our society and the rest of the world with a reasonable and realistic picture of the culture in which we exist; and that can provide us with the means by which we can make use of the self-governing process

guaranteed to us by the Constitution. These four requirements constitute the analytical yardstick that is often applied to the mass media throughout this text.

Americans should be pleased that for the most part, the mass media in the United States are profitable and powerful institutions. It is only if they are profitable that they can reasonably be expected to service society in the ways noted above. It is only if they are powerful that they can fight any attempt by government and other interests who seek to deter them in meeting these responsibilities fairly and independently. Yet when winning profits and power becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to an end (and this is not an uncommon occurrence in the mass media today), the service we demand and need from our mass media may be seriously diminished. This is the central issue that the book attempts to explore.

This is the sixth edition of *Mass Media in America*. Several changes from previous editions need to be noted. The book has been reorganized substantially to reflect a more logical approach to the central theme. Part I outlines the basic foundations of mass media in the United States. Part II provides a detailed analysis of individual mass media: newspapers, magazines, books, radio, the recording industry, motion pictures, and television. Finally, the four chapters in Part III explore how the mass media succeed and fail in their attempt to service the economic system, provide needed information to the public, reflect our culture, and fuel our democratic political system. The sixth edition has been rewritten substantially as well. About eighty percent of the material is fresh prose that is the result of my attempts to reflect on the mass media in the eighties as well as push the reader into the nineties. The book contains new graphics: about 50 of the 100 photographs are new, and there are nearly three dozen charts and graphs, something previous editions did not contain. Finally, the sixth edition contains a clearer vision of mass communications in our society, a vision honed by my more than thirty years of work in, study of, and teaching about, the mass media in America.

There is one name on the cover of this volume, but an author never completes a book without significant assistance from scores of other persons; let me thank a few. First, I would like to thank my colleagues at the University of Washington (Jerry Baldasty, Roger Simpson, Larry Bowen, Tony Giffard, Ed Bassett, the late Bill Ames, and others), and my colleagues at other colleges and universities who offered invaluable advice (Thomas Connery, University of St. Thomas; James Hoyt, University of Wisconsin; Carolyn Johnson, California State University, Fullerton; Bill McKeen, University of Florida; Robert Ogles, Purdue University; Everett Rogers, University of Southern California; Don Singleton, Salisbury State University; and Jean Ward, University of Minnesota). I would also like to thank the editorial and production team at Macmillan, notably David Chodoff, Tony English, Chris Midgol, Diane Kraut, John Sollami, Linda Greenberg, and Pam Kennedy Oborski. I am grateful to the many students who have used this text in the past and offered their advice and inspiration. Finally, thanks as always go to the Pember clan, Diann, Alison, and Brian, for being (as usual) understanding as the author struggled to generate the sixth edition of *Mass Media in America*.

Don R. Pember  
Seattle, Washington



# **CONTENTS**

Preface     V



---

## **PART I FOUNDATIONS**

**2**

- 1 The World of Mass Media     5
- 2 Historical Foundations     15
- 3 Theoretical and Research Foundations     48
- 4 Economic Foundations     69



---

## **PART II THE MASS MEDIA**

**114**

- 5 Newspapers     117
- 6 Magazines and Books     170
- 7 Radio and the Recording Industry     210
- 8 Motion Pictures     255
- 9 Television     299



---

## **PART III MEDIA FUNCTIONS**

**374**

- 10 The Economic Function: Advertising and  
Economic Information     377
- 11 The Informing Function: Public Relations  
and News     399
- 12 Mass Media and Culture     437
- 13 The Political Function: Government  
and the Mass Media     475

Glossary     519

Index     527

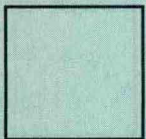
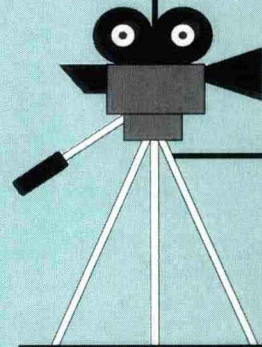
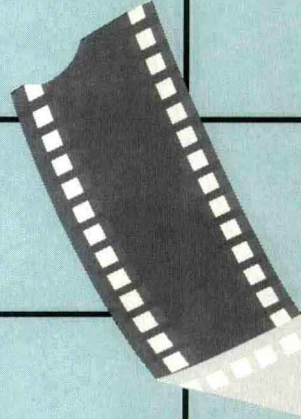
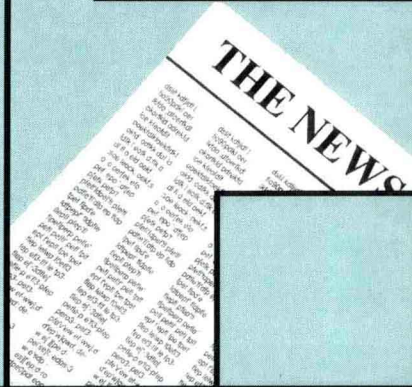


# ***MASS MEDIA IN AMERICA***



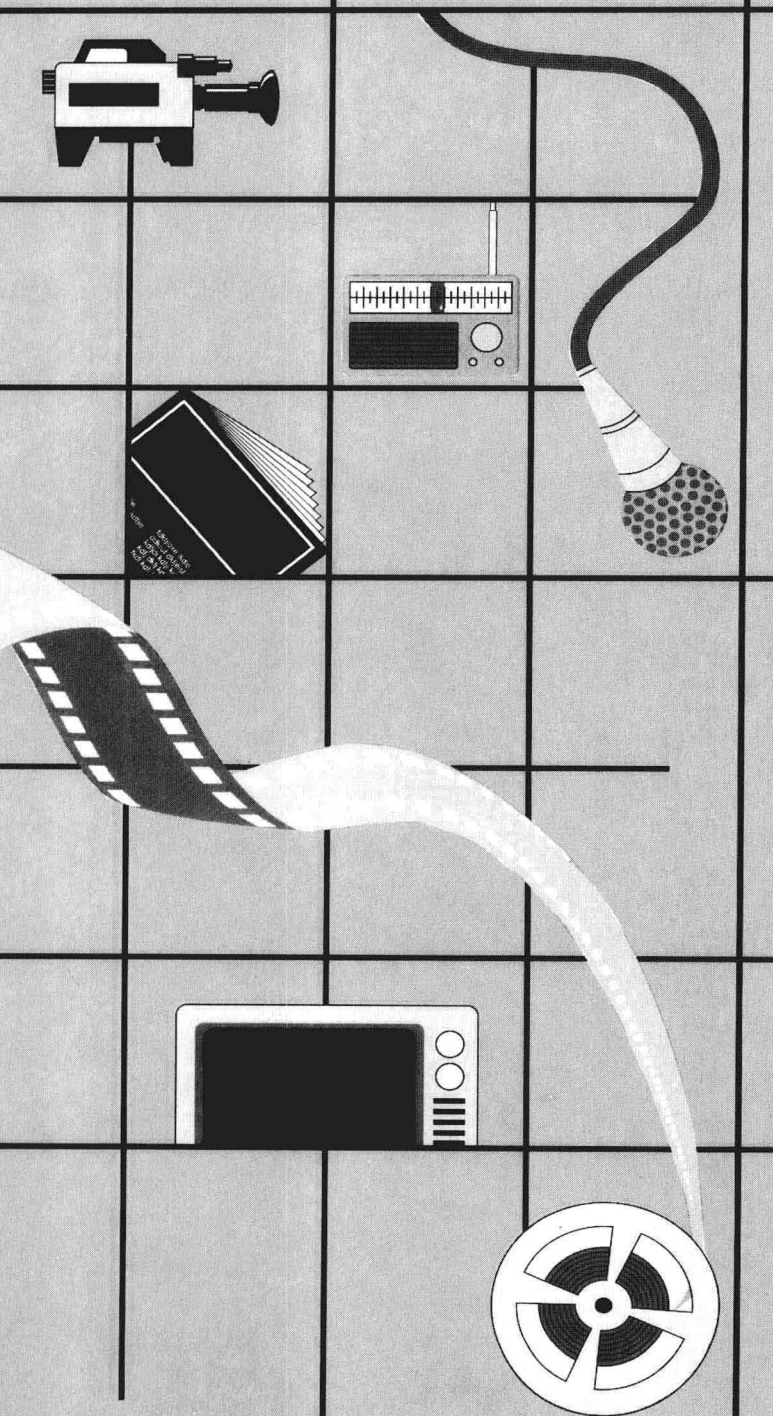
P A R T

1. The World of Mass Media
2. Historical Foundations
3. Theoretical and Research Foundations
4. Economic Foundations



# ***FOUNDATIONS***

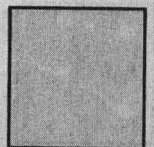




Understanding the condition of the mass media in America in the 1990s requires the student to have a foundation of other information, a foundation that Part I provides. Chapter 1 presents a brief overview of the media. Chapter 2 places them in their historical context. American mass media are surely contemporary, but they are also tradition-bound in many ways; what is done today in the world of newspapers or radio or film is often done because it has always been done.

Chapter 3 explains mass communication theory and research, which is what provides us with the information we have about the media. The study of mass communication is a social science, and like other social scientists, researchers in this field have generated techniques and methods for gathering information about their chosen subject. The information they have gathered has in turn helped them construct theories about mass communication and its relationships to various segments of our society.

Chapter 4 describes the economic structure on which the mass media are erected. In some ways this is the most important chapter in the book, for if the people who direct and create the mass media are bound by tradition, they are also most surely bound by economic concerns. This chapter explores the business of the mass media: the way the various media generate revenues and the ownership structure of the press.








# CHAPTER 1

## THE WORLD OF MASS MEDIA



**M**ass media. It's everywhere. Never has there been a society that was so saturated with systems of mass communications. Add up all the hours each day you spend with the mass media: television, radio, recorded music, motion pictures, newspapers, magazines, books. If you are like most people, you spend more time with mass media than almost anything else. Mass media are with you when you work and play, when you drive or walk. You can use mass media in the city or in the country, at a lake or in the mountains. When the astronauts are circling the earth in a space shuttle, they are usually awakened by recorded music. The crews on nuclear-powered submarines that circle the globe under the sea are entertained by motion pictures. As a patient recovers from surgery in the hospital, there is usually a television at the bedside along with a nurse and a pitcher of ice water.

Some call this the Age of Information. Maybe. Maybe not. But it surely is the Age of Mass Media. The first tool of mass communication—the printing press—was invented less than 550 years ago. Today mass communications and mass media dominate our society. Little wonder when the amount of available mass media is considered (figure 1-1). There are about 1,610 daily newspapers published each day and more than 63 million copies circulated nationwide. More than 7,600 weekly, bi-weekly, or triweekly newspapers publish 55 million copies. Approximately 10,000 different magazines are published every week, every other week, or monthly. Fifty thousand new book titles appear annually. More than 1,400 over-the-air television stations send their signals to television sets in 93 million American homes. Fifty-seven hundred cable systems carry television signals—including about 50 cable television networks—to 50 million homes. There are about 10,000 radio stations broadcasting to nearly 500 million radio sets in the United States. Between 400 and 500 feature films are produced and exhibited on one of the nation's 25,000 theater screens annually. Thousands more instructional and documentary and short films are produced annually as well. There are magazines distributed on computer discs, electronic data transmission systems like teletext and videotex, videocassettes, and



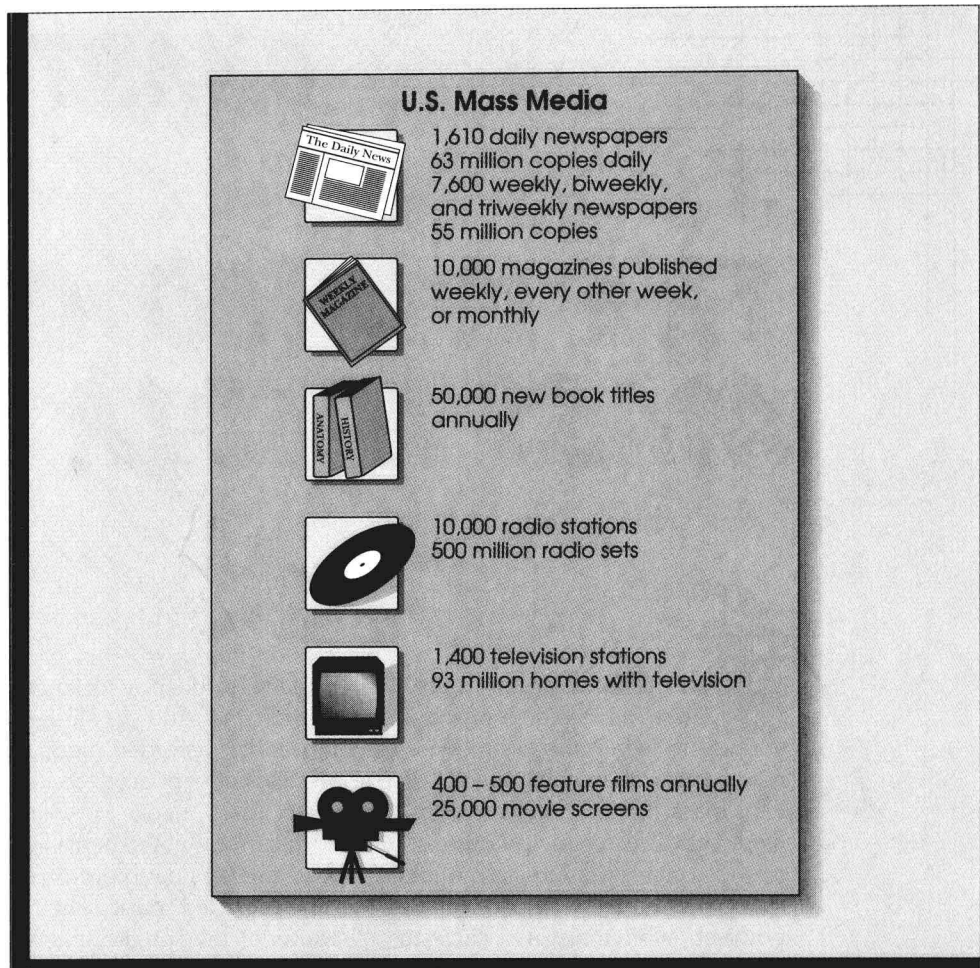


FIGURE 1-1 The enormous output and reach of the mass media reflect their importance in our society.

other emerging media forms. At times we seem 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 actions of Congress to the adventures of Calvin and Hobbes in the comic strips, from conservative philosophy in the *National Review* to liberal thought in the *Nation*, from the theater of Joseph Papp, to the energy of rap—it's all there. We may have to look for it at times, visit that out-of-the-way bookstore 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.



There is a wide variety of content available to persons who use the mass media. Pictured are Eric B. and Rakim, one of the earliest and most successful rap music teams in the nation. Many rap singers copied Rakim's style, and a mode of rap called "Rakimism" developed. (© 1988 UNI Records, Inc.)



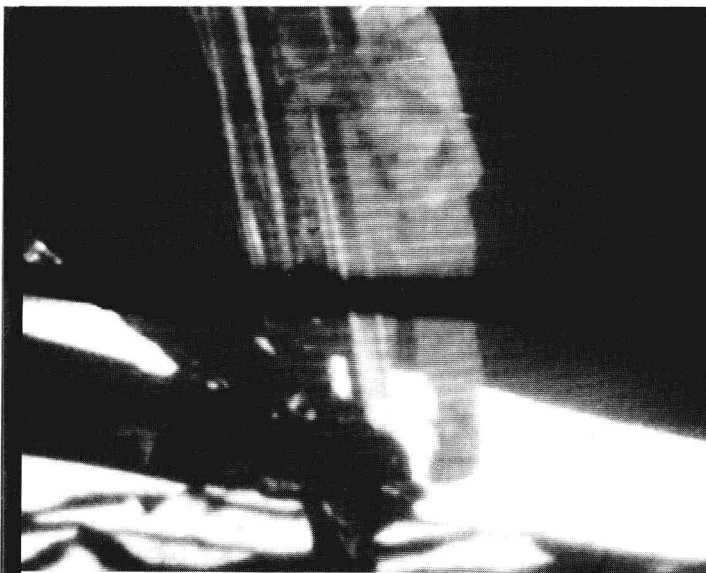
## FROM CONVERSATION TO COMMUNICATION

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 interposed communication. The interposed device is usually some kind of hardware or technological tool. It amplifies the message or allows it to be



"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

# The New York Times

LATE CITY EDITION

Weather: Rain, warm today, clear tonight. Heavy showers tomorrow. Temp. range today 60-80, Sunday 70-80. Temp. High Index tomorrow 84. Complete U.S. report on P. 31.

VOL. CXVIII, No. 40,721

© 1969 The New York Times Company

NEW YORK, MONDAY, JULY 21, 1969

10 CENTS

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

### Voice From Moon: 'Eagle Has Landed'

CAGLE (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 is over.  
TRANQUILITY BASE: Roger, stay for T1.  
HOUSTON: Roger and we see you setting the on 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: I've second that.  
APOLLO CONTROL: The next major step you stay will be for the T2 event. That is at 21 minutes 28 seconds after initiation of power descent.  
COLUMBIA: Up telemetry command reset to re-acquire 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 1008.  
TRANQUILITY BASE: Roger. Do you want the horizontal to 1027?  
HOUSTON: That's affirmative.  
APOLLO CONTROL: We're now less than four minutes from our next stay on 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 on 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



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

Special to The New York Times

HOUSTON, Monday, July 21—Men have landed and walked on the moon.

Two Americans, astronauts of Apollo 11, steered their Eagle four-legged lunar module safely and smoothly to the barren, landing yesterday at 4:17:40 P.M., Eastern daylight time.

Neil A. Armstrong, the 38-year-old civilian commander, radioed to earth and the mission control team here.

Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed.

The first men to reach the moon—Mr. Armstrong and his colleague, Col. Edwin E. Aldrin Jr. of the Air Force—brought their ship to rest on a level, rock-free plain near the southwestern shore of the vast Sea of Tranquility.

About an hour and a half 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 back pack 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 in fine layers like powdered charcoal to the sole and sides of 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 tracks on the floor sandy particles."

After 13 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 hopping and leaping about in a demonstration of their lunar agility.

They found walking and working on the moon less tiring than had been forecast. Mr. Armstrong said he expected he was "very comfortable."

And despite lack on earth found the black and white color photographs of the Bay-shaped lunar module and the moon.

Astronaut Neil Armstrong sets foot on the moon—and 500 million people watch on television. Millions then read detailed coverage in the newspaper the next day. (Top: Complex of United Press International)



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 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



Most Americans got their first close-up view of Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev when he was interviewed by journalists Stuart Novins and Daniel Schorr on the CBS television program "Face the Nation" in 1959. Television can bring the world into the living room.

(CBS News)

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 us with 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 communication 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 communication 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 com-

mercial 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 advertising 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.



## WHAT THE MASS MEDIA MEAN TO US

The nation in which we live is made up of a great many systems and institutions. We have a political system, an economic system, a legal system, a governmental system. We have educational institutions, medical institutions, research institutions, social service institutions. These systems and institutions are joined together like the strands of a spider web. Pull one strand of a web, and the rest of the web collapses or sags measurably. Take away one of these systems or institutions, and our society would change measurably as well. The mass media are integrated into these systems and institutions. Our mass communications system is not like an overlay that can be withdrawn without changing the nature of our society. It is an integral part of our nation's business, education, culture, government and other systems and institutions. In other words, if by some stroke of a magic wand we could make all mass media disappear tomorrow, society would not remain intact. Without mass communications things would change dramatically.

The mass media play an essential role in serving our political and governmental systems. Democracy presumes an informed, educated electorate. In our nation the people are the governors, as old-fashioned as that sounds. As the governors we are expected to give advice to our elected representatives, and the mass media is an important ally in that endeavor. When the press covers a protest march at a courthouse, it is informing the elected representatives that some citizens don't like what is going on, some citizens want a change. The mass media have the power to amplify the message.

If we are to elect and re-elect those who choose to serve as our representatives or judges or mayors or president, we must first evaluate their qualifications and their job performance. The mass media is supposed to bring us the information that permits this evaluation. Theoretically, we could all go to Congress and watch over the shoulders of the representatives and senators. Practically, that is impossible. We are sometimes asked to vote directly on issues through referenda or initiatives. We must find out about these issues before we can vote. The press is supposed to give us this information. The political or governmental role of the press in our society is so important that we grant some special rights to persons who work as journalists. And the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution insures that government will not interfere with the flow of information in this mass communications system.

The mass media services our capitalistic economic system. Can you imagine our economy functioning without the flow of economic information? How could compe-