chapter

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p a r t **1**

Introduction
to the Media

learning objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

- Define the steps in the communication process using the SMCR model.

- Explain the significance of premedia communication networks, print-based communication networks, electronic communication networks, and interactive communication networks.

- Identify the eight major mass media operating in the United States today.

- Name the four major dimensions of media literacy. Explain how people with high versus low levels of media literacy interpret media content differently.

- List four major approaches to looking at the effects of media on individuals and society.

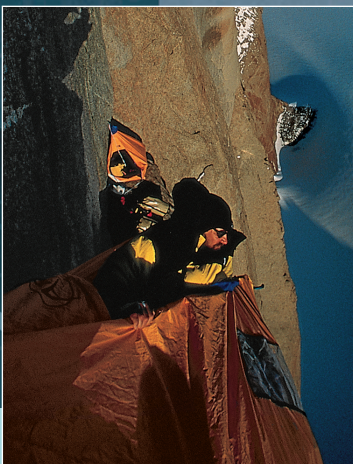- Explain four functions of the mass media in society.

Living in a Media World

Writer/climber Jon Krakauer

Jon Krakauer was out of his tent and on his way to the top of Mount Everest hours before dawn on Friday, May 10, 1996. The journalist was just one of dozens of climbers trying to reach the summit at 29,028 feet. Climbing Everest had been a lifelong dream for Krakauer, and an assignment for *Outside* magazine had made it possible.

Krakauer reached the summit at 1:12 P.M., and after a brief stay at the top he started on the long way back down. But during his descent a surprise snowstorm rolled in. At 6:45 P.M., just as it was getting dark, Krakauer stumbled back into camp and collapsed in his tent. Others weren't so fortunate. By the time the storm cleared, eight of the climbers on the world's tallest mountain were dead, including guides Rob Hall and Scott Fischer.

Jon Krakauer: Live from Mount Everest

Despite Mount Everest's remote location on the border between Nepal and Tibet, the world watched the tragedy unfold through websites, newspapers, television, magazines, and eventually even a major motion picture. In May of each year, Everest Base Camp becomes media central as climbers attempt to reach the summit and journalists show up to cover them, in part because of the high degree of risk involved. During a typical year, 6 to 10 people will die on the mountain.

To complete his assignment of researching and writing a story about the commercialization of Mount Everest, Krakauer climbed the peak as a paying customer of famed guide Rob Hall. Hall, along with rival guide Scott Fischer, would take amateur climbers to the top of the world for fees that in some cases were as high as $65,000. (It should be noted that *Outside* was a willing participant in the commercialization of the mountain. The magazine paid $10,000 of Hall's fee in cash; the rest was to have been paid in the form of free advertising space to promote Hall's Everest excursions.) Krakauer was not the only journalist on the mountain on the day of the snowstorm. Climber Sandy Hill Pittman, who was married at the time to MTV cofounder Bob Pittman, was sending daily dispatches to NBC's website via satellite phone and yak courier. Reporter Jane Bromet of *Outside Online,* a Web magazine, was covering the climb from Everest Base Camp; a South African newspaper was sponsoring another expedition; and an IMAX film crew was shooting a documentary about climbing the peak. The IMAX team, led by filmmaker and professional climber David Breashers, produced the movie *Everest,* which became the most successful large-format IMAX film ever and one of the top films of 1997. And this is not an exhaustive list of the reporters, photographers, and filmmakers who were present.

Krakauer says that because of media coverage, thousands of people around the world knew more about what was

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happening on the mountain than did the people who were climbing: "A teammate might call home on a satellite phone, for instance, and learn what the South Africans were doing at Camp Two from a spouse in New Zealand or Michigan who'd been surfing the World Wide Web."

In his best-selling book *Into Thin Air*, Krakauer engaged in ruthless introspection about how his presence, and that of other journalists, might have contributed to the May 1996 deaths. He says that none of the other paying customers had been told in advance that there would be a working reporter on the trip. Krakauer questions whether the guides would have tried so hard to reach the summit had there not been a media presence. Could they afford not to get their clients to the top of the mountain with the whole world watching?

This is not to say that the presence of journalists was entirely negative. Krakauer credits the well-equipped, well-

prepared IMAX film crew with providing much-needed help and bottled oxygen to the other struggling groups after the storm. Even though their help could have jeopardized their $5.5 million film, the crew put down their cameras and simply worked at saving lives.

The reports of the deaths on Everest have not discouraged people from climbing the mountain, or the media from covering them. Inquiries about commercial Everest trips increased by 20 percent in 1997, perhaps because of the media's coverage of the 1996 season. And Everest made the cover of *Time* magazine in the summer of 2001 when blind climber Erik Weihenmayer reached the top, along with a film crew producing a documentary about his amazing climb.

As the events on Mount Everest illustrate, the consequences of living in a media world are not always

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1800			1900	1910	1920	1930
1804 Lewis and Clark expedition	**1848** California gold rush begins	**1879** Thomas Edison invents electric light bulb	**1903** Orville and Wilbur Wright fly first airplane	**1914** World War I begins	**1920** 19th Amendment passed, giving U.S. women the right to vote	**1933** Adolph Hitler elected chancellor of Germany
1812 War of 1812 fought	**1859** Charles Darwin publishes *On the Origin of Species*	**1886** Statue of Liberty erected			**1929** U.S. Stock Market Crash, leading to Great Depression	
1825 Erie Canal opened	**1861** U.S. Civil War begins	**1898** Spanish-American War fought				
1835 Alexis de Touqueville's *Democracy in America* published	**1869** Trans-continental railroad completed					

1844
Samuel Morse develops the telegraph; signals can be sent at a distance.

1890s
Nickelodeon movie theaters become popular.

1814
Steam-powered printing presses speed production of books and newspapers.

1887–1888
Emile Berliner develops the gramophone, which plays music on mass-produced discs.

◀ **Before the 15th century**
Messages are transmitted by word-of-mouth.

◀ **1450s**
The first practical printing press is developed; printed material can be mass-produced.

obvious. The presence of reporters may encourage people to behave recklessly, or their stories may encourage people to try things they would not have tried otherwise. The media can also serve to bring the world together through arresting images. The media might even encourage people to reach their fullest potential through inspirational stories of heroism. But we can be certain that a world brimming with active media is significantly different from one without them. So it is vital that we be media literate—that we understand how the media operate, why they function as they do, and what roles they play in our lives. In this chapter we will look at several aspects of media literacy: the meaning of mass communication, the evolution of communication networks, and what we need to know about the media to understand the roles they play in society.

Sources: David Pugliese, "A Mountaineer's Perspective," *Ottawa Citizen,* May 18, 2002, p. A13; Jon Krakauer, *Into Thin Air: A Personal Account of the Mount Everest Disaster* (New York: Villard, 1997); Broughton Coburn, *Everest: Mountain without Mercy* (National Geographic Society, 1997); Greg Child, "Everest a Year Later: Lessons in Futility," *Outside,* May 1997; and Karl Taro Greenfeld, "Blind to Failure," *Time,* June 15, 2001, pp. 52–63.

WEB links

Everest Weblink

Boston's Museum of Science offers a Shockwave tour of the IMAX film crew's journey up Mount Everest. Be advised: You will need a high-speed Internet connection to view this, and even then it can be slow. Go to:

www.mos.org/Everest/tour/tour.htm

1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000–2003
1941 World War II begins **1945** U.S. drops two atomic bombs on Japan	**1950** Korean War begins **1953** Francis Crick and James Watson discover structure of DNA **1957** Soviet Union launches *Sputnik I*	**1963** Martin Luther King Jr. delivers "I Have a Dream" speech during Washington D.C. civil-rights march **1967** Christian Barnard performs first human-to-human heart transplant **1969** Neil Armstrong is first man to walk on the moon	**1974** U. S. President Richard Nixon resigns due to Watergate scandal **1977** Apple II personal computer introduced **1979** First test-tube baby born	**1981** IBM personal computer introduced **1983** HIV described **1984** Ozone hole discovered over Antarctica **1986** Space shuttle *Challenger* explodes	**1991** Soviet Union disbands **1993** European Union formed **1994** Nelson Mandela elected President of South Africa **1994** Hubble space telescope confirms existence of a black hole **1997** Dolly the sheep is first mammal cloned from an adult cell	**2001** Terrorist attack destroys World Trade Center **2003** U.S. invades Iraq **2003** Human genome project completed

1939

Regularly scheduled television broadcasts begin in New York City.

1969

The first computers are connected to the fledgling Internet.

ELEMENTS OF MASS COMMUNICATION

Although people often use the terms *mass communication* and *mass media* interchangeably, they are significantly different concepts. Mass communication is a process, whereas the **mass media** are simply technological tools used to transmit the messages of mass communication.[1] In the Introduction we defined *mass communication* as a societywide communication process in which an individual or institution uses technology to send messages to a large mixed audience, most of whose members are not known to the sender. In this section we will look at each of the elements of that definition: the *sender,* the *message,* the *channel,* and the *receiver* (this is sometimes referred to as the **SMCR model**—Figure 1.1.

The Sender

When critics talk about "the media" as a potent force in the United States today, they are often talking about the ability of a few large corporations to control the messages that go out through the various channels of mass communication. These corporations, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 2, are the major senders in the mass communication process. They are the large, bureaucratic organizations that produce the complex messages we receive through the mass media, and they employ large numbers of people. If you look at the credits of a major Hollywood movie, you'll see hundreds of names listed. Even a relatively straightforward medium like a newspaper requires a substantial staff of writers, editors, graphic artists, photographers, computer specialists, printers, truck drivers, delivery people, janitors, librarians, circulation clerks, accountants, advertising salespeople, business managers, and a publisher.

The media include other senders besides major corporations, however. For example, although the majority of the most frequently visited websites are produced by large media organizations, the Internet has given rise to smaller, more intimate media without the accompanying structure. The Drudge Report, which first broke the story about President Bill Clinton's affair with intern Monica Lewinski, is operated by a single person without any staff.[2]

mass media

Technological tools used to transmit the messages of mass communication.

SMCR model

The sender, message, channel, receiver model.

In the SMCR model, a sender transmits a message using a communication channel so that it is received by an audience member, who must then decode the message and interpret it. The nature of the channel is going to affect how the message is transmitted and how it is interpreted. The receiver can then send feedback to the original sender, starting the process over. Noise can interfere with the transmission of the message.

figure **1.1**

SMCR Model

Noise

Interpretation

Message

Sender → Receiver

Medium

Feedback
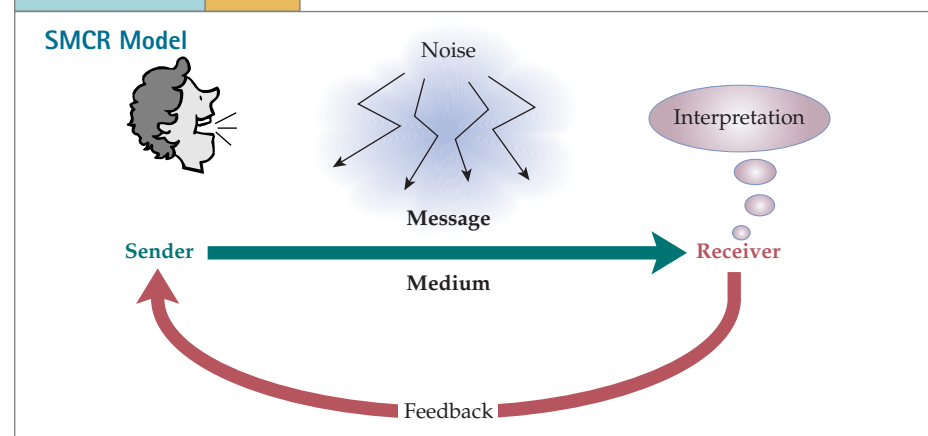
Mass communication is an example of one-on-many communication, with few senders and many receivers. This is in contrast to interpersonal communication, which involves roughly equal numbers of senders and receivers. Sociologist C. Wright Mills wrote that the real power of the mass media is that they can control what topics are being covered and how much attention they receive. The most significant change brought about by the media in the United States, he said, was that public communication became a matter of sending information to a large number of receivers, rather than a dialogue between roughly equal numbers of senders and receivers.[3] It is possible that the Internet may be reversing this trend because audience members can now be active participants in the discussion and not merely passive receivers.

The Message

The **message** is the actual content being transmitted by the sender. Before a message can be transmitted, it must be encoded. **Encoding** requires at least two steps. First, the sender's ideas must be turned into a message: A script for a broadcast is written, a graphic is created, or a newspaper story is written. Then the message must be prepared for transmission: The script is taped and sent out over the air, the graphic is placed on a Web page, or the newspaper is printed.

Mass communication messages are transmitted rapidly to the receivers. Audience members can receive the message simultaneously, as they would in the case of a radio broadcast; at similar though not identical times, as in the case of a newspaper or magazine; and occasionally over an extended period, as in the case of a CD, movie, or video. In addition to being transmitted rapidly, mass communication messages are public messages that are available to a wide audience.

Mass communication messages also tend to be transient—here today and gone tomorrow. The newspapers and magazines are recycled, a new movie is showing at the theater, or a broadcast ends. Even though the message can be stored in the form of a computer file or videotape, it is generally replaced when something new comes along. The receiver's attention fades even if the physical item remains.

Production of mass communication messages is generally expensive. The average cost of making a movie in 2000 was $54.8 million, and marketing it cost an average of $27.3 million.[4] Thirty seconds of commercial time during the Super Bowl can cost more than $1 million. But again, if people do not seek to make money with their messages, they can reach a large audience through the Internet at a relatively low cost.

What do all these messages mean? According to media scholar James Potter, the meaning of messages

message
The actual content being transmitted by the sender.

encoding
The process of turning the sender's ideas into a message and preparing the message for transmission.

The process of transforming a movie script into a major motion picture is expensive, time consuming, and can involve the work of thousands of people.

depends on who is receiving them and what kinds of media literacy skills they can use to decode them. Potter writes that people with low levels of media literacy will look at the surface meanings in media content, whereas those with higher levels of media literacy can interpret messages from a wide range of perspectives with many choices of meanings.[5] For example, Krakauer's book about Mount Everest, *Into Thin Air,* can be read as a simple adventure story, a story of the battle between man and nature, or a study on obsession. Which of these interpretations is correct? Although *Into Thin Air* is most emphatically an adventure story, it also tells of Krakauer's struggle with the mountain and weather, as well as discussing why people are drawn to dangerous activities like mountain climbing.

The Channel

channel

The actual medium used to transmit the message.

The **channel** is the actual medium used to transmit the message. Recall that a mass medium is a technological tool. Think about a newspaper. It consists of black and colored ink printed on relatively low-quality paper. It is portable, readily available, and cheap. An article can be clipped from the paper and placed in a pocket. A newspaper also provides local and regional news in greater depth than is possible with any other medium.[6]

Print media include books, magazines, newspapers, billboards, and posters. Audiovisual media include radio, sound recordings, broadcast television, cable and satellite television, and video recordings. Interactive media include the Internet and CD-ROMs.

What about telephones, faxes, letters, PalmPilots, and e-mail? Do they fit in as channels of mass communication? Although not generally considered to be mass media, an unsolicited commercial e-mail, known as *spam,* could satisfy at least part of the definition of mass communication. News reports arriving via a small screen on an electronic organizer or wireless phone seem to qualify. But for the time being these are limited channels of communication that generally carry targeted messages and therefore cannot really be considered mass media.

The nature of the channel used to transmit a message can change the meaning of the message. Take, for example, the daily news. On the radio, the news is something happening in the background; read in a newspaper, news is something that demands your undivided attention. But can you call it news when it is presented by a naked man or woman on the Naked News website? A dramatic speech given by a great orator on television will likely be much more influential than a transcript of it that's published on the Internet the next day.

The Receiver

receiver

The audience for the mass communication message.

decoding

The process of translating a signal from a mass medium into a form that the receiver can understand.

The **receiver** is the audience for the mass communication message, that is, the people who are receiving and decoding the message. **Decoding** is the process of translating a signal from a mass medium into a form that the receiver can understand. The term *mass* can have at least two meanings when referring to audiences. In one sense, the term refers to the mix of ordinary people who receive the message—"the masses." In a second sense, the term refers to the size of the audience. The concept of mass, or popular, taste is an old one, but the concept of a massive, or large, audience developed in the 20th century. The mass audiences reading major newspapers, watching network television, or going to the movies are much larger than the crowds of people that gather for

events such as political rallies or rock concerts. They form a **heterogeneous audience**—an audience made up of a mix of people who differ in age, sex, education, ethnicity, race, religion, and other characteristics. As with size, heterogeneity is a matter of degree. A small-town radio station is likely to reach an audience whose members are more similar than those listening to a station in a major urban area.

The receivers of a mass communication message also comprise an **anonymous audience.** This means that the sender does not personally know all (or even most) of the people in the audience. These are not isolated people who have no connection to anyone else; they simply are unknown to the sender.

EVOLUTION OF THE MEDIA WORLD

Where did our media world come from? Is it just a product of the late 20th century, with its constant flow of print and electronic messages? Not really. The world of interconnected and overlapping communication networks that surrounds us has been evolving for hundreds of years. Before the advent of the mass media, people primarily interacted face-to-face. Most of the time they interacted only with people like themselves and had little contact with the outside world. But people gradually created communication networks that used first interpersonal channels, then print media, electronic media, and, most recently, interactive media. This section examines how various communication networks have grown over the centuries to form the media world we live in.

Before Print: Pre Mass Media Communication Networks

The first major communication network in the Western world actually predates the mass media; it was developed by the Roman Catholic Church in the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. During that period messages flowed from the Vatican

heterogeneous audience

An audience made up of a mix of people who differ in age, sex, education, ethnicity, race, religion, and other characteristics.

anonymous audience

An audience the sender does not personally know. These are not anonymous, isolated people who have no connection to anyone else; they simply are anonymous in their audience status.

The patrons of this sports bar watching and cheering Monday Night Football may know each other, but they are not known to the people putting together the program.

in Italy through the bishops to priests in cathedrals and villages throughout Europe, and finally to their congregations through sermons from the pulpit.[7]

Print: Arrival of the Book

The first major expansion in communication beyond the Church was the development of the printing press—in particular, the invention of movable type in the 1450s—and the subsequent mass production of printed materials. Mass printing made it possible for major social changes, such as the Protestant Reformation, to spread from their country of origin to the rest of Europe and the world. Transmitting messages to a larger audience became easier and cheaper with the birth of the printing press, which led to the publication and widespread dissemination of books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, and maps.

Although the printing press allowed for the mass production of information, printing was still relatively slow and publications were still fairly expensive. The addition of steam power to the printing press in 1814 dramatically increased the rate at which printed material could be reproduced. Revenues from advertising of the new mass-produced goods helped drive down the cost of newspapers and magazines, thus spreading the communication net ever wider.

Electronic Networks: Telegraph, Gramophone, Radio, Movies, and Television

The media world became much more complex with the advent of electronic communication. This began in 1844 with the opening of the first telegraph line, from Baltimore to Washington, D.C. For the first time, the communication network extended beyond personal limitations. Before the development of the telegraph, sending a message from one place to another meant that the paper it was written on had to be physically carried from one location to another; this made the fastest form of transportation the fastest form of communication as well. But the telegraph wire enabled a message to span a great distance almost instantaneously. In 1866 the Atlantic Ocean was crossed by telegraph cable, overcoming a barrier that had stood as long as humans had communicated. Instead of sending a message on a two-week journey by boat across the ocean and waiting for a reply to come back the same way, two people on opposite sides of the ocean could carry on a dialogue via telegraph.

In the 1880s Emile Berliner invented the gramophone, or phonograph, which played mass-produced discs containing about three minutes of music. Just as printed books made possible the storage and spread of ideas, so the gramophone allowed musical performances to be captured and kept. Before the development of the gramophone, the only way to hear music was to go to a concert or perform it oneself.

The invention of radio in the late 19th century freed electronic communication from the limits imposed on it by telegraph wires, and the media world grew in complexity once again. Messages could come into the home at any time and at almost no cost to the receiver. All that was needed was a radio set to receive an endless variety of cultural content, news, and other programming.

Movies were first shown at nickelodeon theaters in the late 1890s and early 1900s, and were produced by an entertainment industry that distributed films nationwide. Young couples on a date in Madison, Alabama, and Madison,
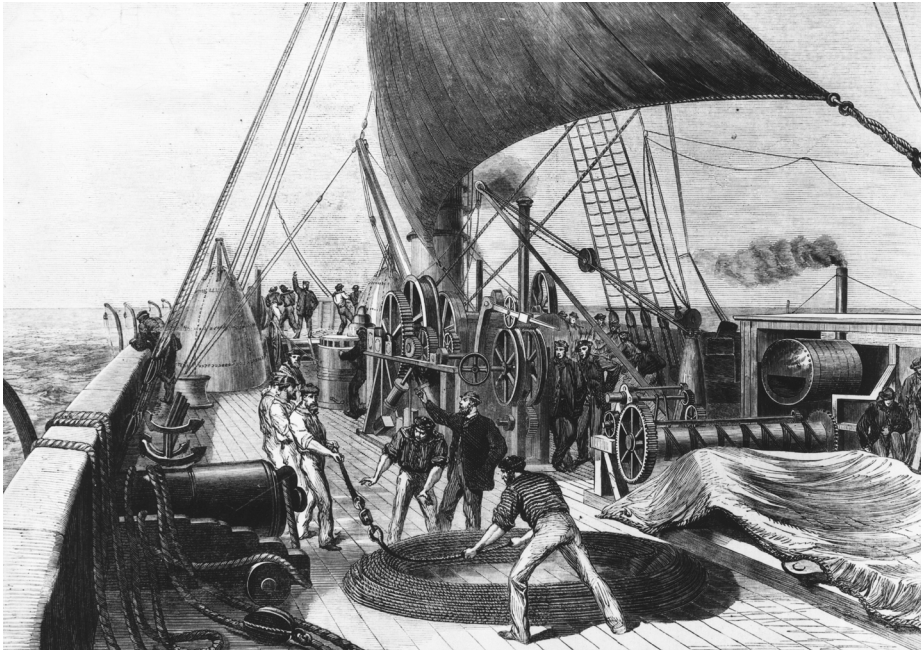
When the first telegraph cable was strung across the Atlantic Ocean from Ireland to Newfoundland, Canada in 1866, messages could cross the ocean in a matter of minutes instead of weeks.

Wisconsin, could see the same movie, copy the same styles of dress, and perhaps even practice the same kisses they had seen in the movie. With radio and the movies, the media world became a shared entertainment culture produced for profit by major media corporations.

In 1939 patrons in New York's neighborhood taverns no longer had to settle for radio broadcasts of Yankees games being played at the Polo Grounds. Instead, a small black-and-white television set located on a pedestal behind the bar showed a faint, flickering image of the game. What would this new medium bring? A new era of accessible education? High political rhetoric to enlighten the masses? Clowns being hit in the face with pies? After a series of delays caused by World War II, television surpassed radio in popularity. It also became a lightning rod for controversy as people stayed home to watch whatever images it would deliver.

The Internet: Interactive Communication

After several decades of television, people had gotten used to the idea that news, information, and entertainment could be delivered almost magically into their homes though they could do little to control the content of this medium beyond changing channels. Then a new medium emerged, one that made senders and receivers readily interchangeable. The Internet became a full-fledged mass communication network in the 1990s (though many people were unaware that the first nodes of this new medium were being linked together as far back as 1969). Rather than simply making it easier for individuals and organizations to send messages to a mass audience, the new computer networks were designed for two-way communication. Reversing a centuries-old trend, they allowed audience members to send messages back to the original senders. Audience members were becoming message providers themselves.

The Internet's interactivity was a culmination of a trend toward giving audience members new controls over their media. The growth of cable and satellite television, along with the video cassette recorder (VCR), had already given viewers more choices and more control; and the remote control allowed them to choose among dozens of channels without leaving their chairs.

The implications of interactivity are significant. Whereas the commercial media have come to be controlled by a smaller and smaller number of large corporations (see Chapter 2), an important channel of mass communication is open to ordinary people in ways that were never possible before. With a trivial investment, individuals can grab the spotlight with news and entertainment on the World Wide Web.

Consider an example. Jennifer Ringley, formerly of Washington, D.C., and now living in California, became an Internet star by setting up a series of Web cameras around her apartment and broadcasting her life, all of it, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In addition to showing her life through a continuous series of still pictures, she shares her thoughts through a Web journal. Subscribers pay a modest fee to get minute-by-minute updates, while non-paying viewers must make do with four pictures an hour. The novelty of being able to watch a young woman eating, working, playing, and bathing on camera attracted a modest amount of attention. But JenniCam, as her site is known, was written up in the *Washington Post* when Ringley moved to California and fell in love with the fiancé of friend and fellow "cam girl" Courtney. The whole drama played out on two sites, with Ringley and her new man on one and the jilted Courtney on the other. A lively discussion sprang up on message boards run by fans of JenniCam. Some called Ringley amoral, and others claimed that her new relationship was a ploy to attract more paying subscribers to her site.[8]

Jennifer Ringley became known nationwide after she started living her life on the Internet in front of web cameras in 1996. The Internet gives ordinary people the possibility of reaching a national audience in a way that was previously impossible.

Audience participation in the communication network can have economic effects as well. For example, fans talking about movies on the Internet were credited with making the tiny-budget movie *Blair Witch Project* an enormous success with their positive comments, and with destroying the chances of the big-budget *Batman & Robin* with their criticism.[9] Cult-movie director Kevin Smith (*Clerks, Dogma*) even used online fans as the subject of his 2001 film *Jay and Silent Bob Strike Back.*

The increased participation of audience members in the media world is not just a low-budget Internet phenomenon. MTV's popular *Total Request Live* is programmed by daily votes on the show's website and features e-mail comments from viewers, along with snippets of viewer-produced

home videos. On a more serious level, C-SPAN's morning talk show *Washington Journal* features a host, a guest or two, and questions called in, faxed, or e-mailed by viewers. The host and guests are the audience rather than the panelists on the show.

Some critics would argue that the growth of cable television stations, websites, and new magazines creates only an illusion of choice because a majority of the channels are still controlled by the same six or seven companies.[10] Even so, it is a new media world, one in which audience members are choosing what media content they will consume and when they will consume it. It's a world that even media giants are having to adjust to.

Media Consumption

The number of distinct media outlets in the United States is huge. As of 2000 there were approximately 1,700 daily newspapers, 11,000 magazines, 9,000 radio stations, 1,000 broadcast television stations, 2,500 book publishers, 7 major movie studios (along with a number of smaller ones), and 34,000 movie screens.[11] And these figures include neither the hundreds of cable and satellite channels available nor the millions of websites.

Consumption trends vary among different media. Consider a few examples:

- The newspaper business has fewer newspapers and readers than in the past. In 1970, there were 63 million households in the United States and 62 million issues of daily papers were sold. By 1999, circulation had dropped to 52 million, but the number of households had grown to 100 million. Yet the revenues and profits of newspaper companies are higher than ever before. Newspapers still have the highest advertising revenue of all media and an average profit margin of over 20 percent. The profits are in large part due to the fact that most newspapers are now monopolies in their cities. In other words, there are fewer papers, but the ones that still exist are extremely profitable because they have little direct competition.[12] Newspaper readership had stabilized by 2000, with 46 percent of adults reading a newspaper daily.[13]

- In 1999 magazine revenues totaled $11 billion and were growing at an annual rate of 4 percent.[14] But consumer magazine circulations have been declining rapidly in recent years; the number of subscribers has fallen, and fewer stores are selling a wide range of magazines.[15] The opposite is true of business and trade magazines—publications that deal with people's work. According to a study by *Mediaweek,* readership of business and trade magazines increased by a dramatic 39 percent between 1999 and 2000.[16] On average, American adults read between 8 and 9 magazines a month.

- The original Big Three television networks (NBC, CBS, and ABC) still receive 40 percent of all television advertising revenue, and their profits average 25 percent a year. But like newspaper readers, viewers of network television are getting older, and marketers want to reach younger audiences. From 1994 to 1999 the network broadcasters' share of the television audience declined from 69 percent to 55 percent.[17] The broadcast market has also expanded to include Fox, WB, UPN, and Pax. Many viewers are also attracted to the Spanish-language Univision, which in 2000 became the nation's fifth largest network.[18]

- A 1998 study found that the Internet, videos, and video games are stealing adults away from television. People are still spending time in front of their sets, but they are not necessarily watching cable or broadcast programming.[19]

- In 2000 the movie industry's box-office receipts totaled $7.7 billion.[20] Compare that year's average of 5 tickets per person, with the 33 tickets per person in 1946.[21] Despite the success of the low-budget *Blair Witch Project* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding,* the majority of successful movies have large production and promotion budgets. Most moviegoers are young people; nearly 40 percent of the audience consists of people ages 12–24.

Children's Media Use

Children are also significant media users; according to a Kaiser Family Foundation study published in 2000, U.S. children spend two-thirds of their leisure time using media in some form. This includes watching television, listening to music, reading, playing video games, and using the computer. (See the Global Perspectives box for a comparison with children in Great Britain.) According to David Walsh, president of the National Institute on Family and Media, "As media keep evolving, and there are more forms, kids don't abandon one for the other; they add it on."[22] Children often use media without supervision in their rooms, which can contain cable television, a VCR, video games, and an Internet connection. In fact, today many houses are being wired for universal media access. According to one New York builder, "We see people planning their homes around this. Every room is now wired for phone, cable, and computer hookup."[23]

UNDERSTANDING THE MEDIA WORLD

Americans have ambivalent feelings about their high levels of media use. The convenience of the cell phone is offset by the fact that it makes one available to others at all times. The wide selection of programming on cable television is wonderful, but the content on some of those channels can be

Young people grow up today expecting to use several forms of media simultaneously, perhaps studying while watching television and surfing the Internet.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

Media Use by Children in Europe

The media environment in Great Britain is more limited than that in the United States when it comes to electronic media, and this difference is reflected in children's levels of media use. A study titled "Children, Young People, and the Changing Media Environment" found that British children between the ages of 6 and 17 spend an average of 5 hours a day using media in one form or another. In contrast, the 2000 Kaiser study mentioned in the text found that American children between the ages of 8 and 18 use the media an average of 6.75 hours a day.

The authors of the British study note that their estimate of children's media use may be exaggerated because young people are likely to use several media at the same time—for example, listening to music while reading a magazine. Time spent with media varied considerably, with heavy users spending 9.5 hours a day using media and light users less than 2 hours a day. Interestingly, the heavy media users typically spent most of their time using the computer and listening to music, though they also watched a great deal of television.

The limited media environment in England compared to the United States is especially evident in broadcasting. In the 1950s, for example, there was a "Toddler's Truce" in which all television stations went off the air from 6 to 7 P.M. on weekdays so that parents could put their children to bed without arguments about watching the tube. As recently as 1980 there were debates over whether "breakfast television" should be banned because it might lead to more car accidents because children were delaying leaving for school.

Sources: Sonia Livingstone and Moira Bovill, *Young People, New Media* (London: London School of Economics and Political Science, 1999); and Ann-Christine P. Diaz, "Kids Use Media Nearly 40 Hours a Week: Study," *Advertising Age,* November 29, 1998, p. 28.

disturbing. It is liberating to be connected to the entire industrialized world through the Internet, but the risk of invasion of privacy is troubling. This section discusses the concept of media literacy, examines how it has changed as media use has increased, and looks at some of the consequences of higher levels of media literacy.

Defining Media Literacy

The term **media literacy** refers to people's understanding of what the media are, how they operate, what messages they are delivering, what roles they play in society, and how audience members respond to these messages. Media scholar James Potter writes that people with high levels of media literacy have a great deal of control over the vision of the world they see through the media and can decide for themselves what the messages mean. In contrast, those with low levels of media literacy can develop exaggerated impressions of problems in society, even when those impressions are in conflict with their own experience. For example, media consumers who spend large amounts of time watching television often perceive society as far more dangerous and crime-ridden than it actually is because that's the image they see on television.[24] Potter says that too often consumers with low levels of media literacy assume that the media have large, obvious, and largely negative effects on other people but little or no effect on themselves. Finally, those with low levels of media literacy tend to blame the media for complex social problems such as teen pregnancy or school violence.

Potter has identified four basic dimensions of media literacy: cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral.[25] Let's take a closer look at each of these.

The Cognitive Dimension—The cognitive dimension of media literacy deals with the ability to intellectually process information communicated by the

> **media literacy**
> People's understanding of what the media are, how they operate, what messages they are delivering, what rules they play in society, and how audience members respond to those messages.

media. This can involve interpreting the meaning of words on a printed page, appreciating the implications of ominous music in a movie, or understanding that a well-dressed character in a television show is wealthy. For example, the hardcover edition of Jon Krakauer's book *Into Thin Air* featured a series of ominous woodcuts at the beginning of each chapter. These illustrations may be viewed simply as decorations at the beginning of each chapter or interpreted as foreshadowing the suffering and peril to come.

The cognitive dimension also includes the skills necessary to access the media: using a computer, programming a VCR, or finding a book in the library. All of these are learned skills. We learn to read in school, learn the meaning of musical cues from movies we've seen, and learn how to navigate the Internet through repeated practice.

The Emotional Dimension—The emotional dimension of media literacy covers the feelings created by media messages. Sometimes the emotions can be overwhelming; examples include the fright felt by a young child watching a scary movie or the joy felt by a parent watching a news story about a child being rescued. People often spend time with songs, movies, books, and other media specifically to feel the emotions they generate.[26] Some people went to see the movie *Titanic* several times in order to experience the emotional release it provided.[27] And it is unlikely that either the *IMAX* documentary *Everest* or Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* would have been such commercial successes were it not for the gut-wrenching emotions created by both the deaths and the dramatic rescues of the climbers on the mountain.

The Aesthetic Dimension—The aesthetic dimension of media literacy involves interpreting media content from an artistic or critical point of view. How well is the media artifact produced? What skills were used in producing it? How does it compare in quality to other similar works? Understanding more than the surface dimensions of media content can require extensive learning. *Into Thin Air* was unquestionably a commercial success, and it was largely a critical success as well. But it was also controversial; several critics suggested that Krakauer had overdramatized the events that took place on Everest and unfairly portrayed one guide as a villain rather than a hero.[28] It is through such critical debate that alternative views and understandings of media content emerge.

The Moral Dimension—The moral dimension of media literacy consists of examining the values of the medium or the message. In a television situation comedy, for example, an underlying message might be that a quick wit is an important tool for dealing with problems and that problems can be solved in a short time. In an action movie, the moral lessons may be that violence and authority are needed if one is to succeed and that the world is a mean and dangerous place. The moral message of most advertisements is that problems can be solved by purchasing something.[29] Among the great many moral issues raised by *Into Thin Air* is the message that the presence of the media changes the nature of an event.

Effects of the Media in Our Lives

Early in the 20th century, people started wondering what effects the new mass media were having on individuals and society. They asked questions

about several aspects of the media, including the messages being sent, the media sending them, the owners of the media, and the audience members themselves.[30]

Message Effects—Fears that media messages would have strong, direct effects on audience members arose in response to propaganda efforts by all combatants during World War I and by Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Critics worried that mass media messages would overwhelm people because the traditional binding influences of family, community, and the church were being weakened by the urbanization of society. People were seen as alienated and isolated, separated by the decline of the family and the growth of technology, interchangeable members of a faceless mass audience. With traditional social forces in decline, it was inevitable, critics feared, that the media would become the most powerful force within society.

In this view, audience members were passive targets who would be hit or injected with the message, which, like a vaccine, would affect most people in similar ways. But research looking for powerful direct effects leading to opinion and behavioral changes generally came up short. In fact, in the 1940s and 1950s researchers sometimes went so far as to question whether media messages had any effect on individuals at all.[31] Although most scholars now focus on indirect or societal effects of the media rather than direct effects on individuals, concern lives on about how the media influence individuals. (For more on this issue, see the Media Literacy box.)

The big problem with the direct-effects approach was that it viewed media messages as a stimulus that would lead to a predictable attitudinal or behavioral response with with nothing intervening between sender and audience. But although people have a shared biological heritage, they have different backgrounds, needs, attitudes, and values. In short, everyone has been socialized differently. The indirect-effects approach still looks at the effects that messages have on individuals, but it takes into account the fact that audience members perceive and interpret these messages selectively according to individual differences. Because people's perceptions are selective, their responses to the messages vary as well. A person

Propaganda posters, such as this one, have been used by virtually every government to build popular support for the effort and sacrifice that war requires.

MEDIA LITERACY

The Legacy of Fear

Concern about how new media will affect our lives is nothing new. Known as the legacy of fear, it dates back at least to the early 20th century.

In the 1930s there was concern that watching movies, especially gangster pictures, would lead to precocious sexual behavior, delinquency, lower standards and ideals, and poor physical and emotional health. The 1940s brought concern about how people would react to radio programs, particularly soap operas.

Comic books came under attack in the 1950s. The notion that comic books were dangerous was popularized by a book titled *Seduction of the Innocents*, by Dr. Fredric Wertham, who also testified before Congress that violent and explicit comic books were a cause of teenage delinquency and sexual behavior. The industry responded to the criticism by forming the Comic Code Authority and ceasing publication of popular crime and horror comics such as *Tales from the Crypt* and *Weird Science.*

The 1980s and 1990s saw controversies over rap and rock lyrics, and several lawsuits charged that hidden messages on heavy-metal albums had led teens to suicide. These controversies reflected widespread concern about the portrayal of drugs, violence, and sex in the media; the fear was that "bad" content would lead to
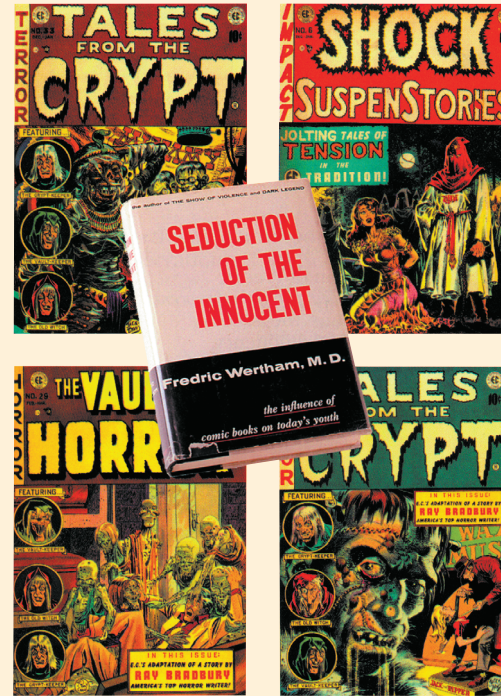
who is preparing to buy a car and a person who just bought one will each react differently to a automobile commercial.

This is not to say that the media do not have effects on individuals, just that they are not the direct, powerful effects that people once feared. Media effects can take a variety of forms:

• *Cognitive effects.* The most common and observable effect is short-term learning of information. This can be as significant as learning about a new medical treatment or as trivial as remembering the lyrics to a popular song. The amount of learning that takes place from media content depends largely on how motivated the person consuming the media is. Political scientist Doris Graber found that people who want to be able to talk intelligently with others about media content (whether it is the news, a sporting event, or an entertainment program) learn much more from the media than people who are simply seeking entertainment. Research has also shown that people pay more attention to and learn more from characters or people they identify with than from those with whom they feel no connection. Hence, people will learn more from a political commentator they agree with than from one they dislike.[32]

• *Attitudinal effects.* People can develop feelings about a product, individual, or idea on the basis of media content. Viewers might decide that they like a new product, political candidate, or hairstyle because of what they have seen in a

damaging social, emotional, and moral effects, especially in children.

Numerous media critics and scholars have argued that television and movies present a distorted view of the world, making it look like a much more violent and dangerous place than it actually is. More recently, wireless telephones have been blamed for a range of social ills from brain tumors caused by radio waves to car accidents caused by distracted drivers.

Why has there been such long-running concern about the possible effects of the media? Media sociologist Charles R. Wright says that people want to be able to solve social ills, and it is easier to believe that poverty, crime, and drug abuse are caused by media coverage than to acknowledge that their causes are complex and not fully understood.

Writing in 1948, sociologists Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld identified four major aspects of public concern about the media:

- *Concern that because the media are everywhere, they might be able to control and manipulate people.* This is a large part of the legacy of fear.

- *Fear that those in power will use the media to reinforce the existing social structure and discourage social criticism.* When critics express concern about who owns and runs the media, this is what they are worried about.

- *Fear that mass entertainment will lower the tastes and standards for popular culture by trying to attract the largest possible audience.* Criticism of action movies, soap operas, and wrestling as replacements for healthier entertainment like Shakespearean plays is at the heart of this concern.

- *The belief that mass entertainment is a waste of time that detracts from more useful activities.* When your mother told you to turn off the television set and go outside, this was her concern!

Sources: Shearon A. Lowery and Melvin L. DeFleur, *Milestones in Mass Communication,* 3rd ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995); Stan Soocher, *They Fought the Law: Rock Music Goes to Court* (New York: Schirmer, 1999); and Charles R. Wright, *Mass Communication: A Sociological Perspective,* 3rd ed. (New York: Random House, 1986).

television commercial or a news broadcast. Typically it is much easier to get people to form new opinions than to get them to change existing ones. For example, political advertising generally tries to change the opinions of uncommitted voters rather than those of voters who already have strong political loyalties.[33]

- *Behavioral effects.* Behavioral effects include actions such as clipping a coupon from a newspaper, buying a product, making a phone call, or voting for a candidate. They might also take the form of imitation of attractive behaviors (e.g., dressing a certain way). Behavioral effects are in many ways the most difficult effects to achieve because people are reluctant to change their behavior. Sometimes, however, people go to the media deliberately looking for behavior to copy, as when a child watches an episode of *Batman* and then imitates it in play, or a teenager watches a movie to learn how to behave on a date.[34]

- *Psychological effects.* Among many other feelings, media content can inspire fear, joy, revulsion, happiness, or amusement.[35] A major psychological effect of media content, especially violent or erotic material, is arousal. Symptoms of arousal can include a rise in heart rate, adrenaline levels, or sexual response. Seeking a psychological response is a common reason for spending time with the media, whether it be to relax, become excited, or achieve

sparking
DEBATE

For as long as there have been media, there have been those who blame the media for society's ills. Others believe that critics are just trying to blame a convenient target. How do you feel about this debate? Why?

emotional release. Arousal can come from content (action, sexuality, loud music or sound) and from style (motion, use of color, the rate at which new images appear). Notice that music videos, which often offer little in terms of learning, provide many of these elements.[36]

Media Effects—As mass media consumption grew in the 1950s, scholars also started paying more attention to the particular medium being used to transmit messages. Until the 1950s, most of the effects research focused on the interaction between the sender, the message, and the receiver, ignoring the influence of the medium itself. But the medium used to communicate is crucial. Canadian communications researcher Marshall McLuhan argued that the medium used for transmission can be as important as the message itself, if not more so. McLuhan is best known for his statement "The medium is the message," by which he meant that the method of message transmittal is a central part of the message. For example, television does an excellent job of transmitting emotional messages because it includes both visual and audio cues along with words. And consider technology that enhances the sound of movies: Dolby 5.1 sound systems are designed to create a realistic experience by surrounding viewers with five distinct sound channels as well as shaking them with a deep bass channel. The goal is not to transmit the message better but rather to create a more overwhelming experience. The same is true of large-screen television sets. Books and newspapers, in contrast, are much better at transmitting complex rational information because these media allow the receiver to review the information and consider its meaning.[37]

Media scholars now recognize that communication technology is a fundamental element of society and that new technologies can lead to social change.[38] Media sociologist Joshua Meyrowitz, for example, argues that the existence and development of various media can lead to radical changes in society. He writes that the development of publishing and books in the 16th century made it easy for new ideas to spread beyond the person who originated them and that this tended to undermine the control of ideas by both the monarchy and the Roman Catholic Church.[39]

Meyrowitz also identifies some social effects of particular media. In *No Sense of Place,* he argues that the major effect of print as a medium is to segregate audiences according to education, age, class, and gender.[40] For example, a teenager needs to be able to read at a certain level to understand the content of a magazine targeted at young women or young men—content that a young child would be unable to comprehend. In contrast, electronic media like television tend to cross demographic boundaries. A child too young to read a magazine or book can still understand at least some of the information in a television program targeted at adults.

The importance of the particular medium used to convey a message applies at every level of communication, from intrapersonal (How is an audio journal different from a written one?) to interpersonal (How is a phone call different from a letter?) to mass (How is a book different from a movie?).

Ownership Effects—Instead of looking at the effects of media and their messages, some scholars examine the influence of those who own and control the media.[41] These critical scholars are concerned because owners of media control which ideas will be produced and distributed by those media.

Home theater installations including big-screen televisions, DVD players, and multichannel surround sound systems help give movies viewed at home the same emotional impact that theatrical movies have.

In the United States, the majority of media outlets are owned by six giant multinational companies: Time Warner (formerly AOL Time Warner), Disney, Viacom, News Corporation, Bertelsmann, and General Electric. Some fear that these corporations are becoming a sort of ruling class, controlling which books are published, which programs are aired, which movies are produced, and which news stories are written.[42]

Media critic and former newspaper editor Ben Bagdikian suggests that the influence of media owners can be seen in how the news media select stories to be covered. He says that large media organizations will kill news stories and entertainment programs that don't reflect well on the corporation. The roots of this tendency go back to when captains of industry such as J. P. Morgan and the Rockefellers bought out magazines that criticized them in order to silence their criticism. What we end up with, Bagdikian says, is not the feared bogey-man of government censorship, but rather "a new Private Ministry of Information and Culture" that gives corporations control over what will be seen, heard, or read.[43]

An Active Audience—Some of the early fears about the effects of the media on audience members arose from the belief that the audience truly was a faceless, undifferentiated mass—that the characteristics of the audience as a mass also applied to the audience's individual members. People were viewed as alienated and isolated individuals who, separated by the decline of the family and the growth of a technological society, didn't communicate with one another. After World War II, the concept of the mass audience began to change as scholars came to realize that the audience was made up of unique members who respond as individuals, not as undifferentiated members of a mass.[44]

geographics

Where people live.

demographics

The measurable charac-
teristics of the audience,
such as age, income,
sex, and marital status.

psychographics

A combination of demo-
graphics with psycho-
logical characteristics
such as attitudes, opin-
ions, and interests.

Today communicators, marketers, and scholars realize that individuals seek different messages at different times and for different reasons. Therefore, they divide audiences on the basis of **geographics,** or where people live; **demo-graphics,** or their gender race, ethnic background, income education, age, educational attainment, and the like; or **psychographics,** a combination of demographics, lifestyle characteristics, and product usage.

Audiences can also be classified by the amount of time they spend using media or by the purposes for which they use media. Each segment of the media audience will behave differently. Take television viewing as an example. Some people tune in daily to watch their favorite soap opera and won't change chan-nels for the entire hour. This is known as appointment viewing. Others surf through a number of channels using the remote control, looking for something that will capture their interest. Still others switch back and forth between two channels. With regard to television, the concept of a mass audience consuming the same content at the same time existed to some extent from the 1950s to the 1970s, when the vast majority of viewers had access to only three broadcast net-works, but that concept broke down completely with the advent of cable, satel-lite, multiple broadcast networks, DVDs, and VCRs.

Media scholar James Potter suggests that the media audience can be seen as a pyramid. At the peak of the pyramid we are all consuming the same mes-sages, such as the horrifying reports of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. At the base of the pyramid we are all different, consuming what interests us personally. In between the narrow top and the wide base are the various audi-ence segments that the media and advertisers are trying to reach.[45]

In addition to recognizing that different people use the media in different ways, scholars have also realized that mass communication messages are gen-erally mediated through other levels of communication. One reason this book discusses intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group communication as well as mass communication is that they all come into play in considering how mass communication operates. People discuss political news with one another, cheer together for their favorite teams while watching a hockey game on television, and think about how stock market information is going to affect their invest-ment plans. A young man's reaction to a love scene in a movie will differ according to whether he is watching it with other young men or with his girl-friend or with his parents.[46]

The Functions of Media in Society

The effects of the media are not limited to those on individuals or groups. Some of their most significant effects can be seen at the level of society as a whole.

According to media scholar Harold Lasswell, the mass media are simply an extension of basic functions that society has always needed. Earlier societies had priests, town criers, storytellers, bards who sang ballads, and travelers who brought news from distant lands.[47] Communication can be functional or dys-functional, but in either case it operates within the social system.[48] For example, some people respond inappropriately to the news of approaching danger. Instead of going to the basement during a tornado warning, they go outside with their video cameras to get a picture of the storm.

Lasswell wrote that the media perform three major social functions:[49]

1. Surveillance of the environment, looking for both threats and opportunities.
2. Correlation of different elements of society, allowing segments of society to work together.
3. Transmission of culture from one generation to the next.

To these three, Charles Wright adds the function of entertainment.[50] Let's look more closely at each of these functions.

Surveillance of the Environment—Much of what we know about the world we learn from the media through the process of **surveillance.** The media show us what is happening not only within our own culture but in other societies as well. Our only other sources of knowledge about the world are our own direct experiences and the direct experiences that others share with us.

The constant flow of information from the media allows us to survey our surroundings. It can give us warnings of approaching danger that involves everything from changes in the weather to earthquakes to violence in the streets. This flow of information is essential for the everyday operation of society. The stock markets depend on the business news, travelers depend on weather forecasts, and grocery shoppers depend on knowing what's on special this week.

Surveillance can also serve to undermine society. For example, when people in poor nations see what life is like in the United States, they may become dissatisfied with the conditions of their lives, and this may lead to social unrest and violence. News about violence may make people more fearful.

Surveillance is not just for the masses. Government and industry leaders watch CNN or C-SPAN or read the *New York Times* in order to know what other government leaders are saying and thinking.

News can also give status to individuals. Because media coverage exposes them to large audiences, they seem important. This process is known as **status conferral.** Thus, the president's spokesperson becomes famous and important simply because he or she is speaking with the media.[51]

Correlation of Different Elements of Society—Correlation is the selection, evaluation, and interpretation of events. It helps impose structure on the news and is accomplished by persuasive communication through editorializing, commentary, advertising, and propaganda. Through correlation we make sense out of what we learn through surveillance. It puts news into categories and provides cues indicating how important each item of news is. Does it appear on the front page of the newspaper? Is it the first item on the broadcast? Is there a teaser on the magazine cover promoting the story?

Although many people say that they would prefer just the facts, virtually the only news outlet that provides no interpretation of events is the public affairs network C-SPAN, which has rigid rules governing how every event is covered. Far more viewers choose to go to the broadcast networks or cable news channels, which provide some interpretation, rather than the relatively dry C-SPAN.[52]

It is often difficult to distinguish between communication that is informative and communication that is persuasive. Editorial judgments are always being made as to which stories should be covered and which should be omitted,

Media scholar Harold Lasswell wrote that the media serve multiple functions within society that go beyond simple, direct effects on audience members.

surveillance
Using the media to observe the world beyond what you can directly experience.

status conferral
The process by which people achieve status simply by being portrayed in the media.

correlation
The selection, evaluation, and interpretation of events. It helps impose structure on the news, and is accomplished by persuasive communication through editorializing, commentary, advertising, and propaganda.

The C-SPAN cable networks allow people across the United States to follow the actions of the House and Senate without actually traveling to Washington, D.C.

which picture of a politician should be published, or what kind of headline should be written. Thus it is useful to view surveillance and correlation as two functions that can be shared by a particular message.

Socialization and Transmission of Culture—Socialization is the process of integrating people within society through the transmission of values, social norms, and knowledge to new members of the group. It is through the media, along with our friends, family, school, and church, that we learn the values of our society. This is important not only for young people as they are growing up but also for immigrants learning about their new country, high school students heading off to college, and new graduates going to work.[53]

The media provide socialization in a variety of ways:

- Through role models in entertainment programming.
- Through goals and desires as presented in media content.
- Through the citizenship values portrayed in the news.
- Through advertisements for products that may be useful to us in different stages of our lives.

Entertainment—Entertainment is communication designed primarily to amuse, even if it serves other functions as well, which it almost always does. A television medical drama would be considered entertainment even though it might educate a person about what life in a hospital is like. In fact, a major characteristic of all television programming is to let people know what life outside their own world is like.[54]

socialization

The process of integrating people within society through the transmission of values, social norms, and knowledge to new members of the group.

entertainment

Communication designed primarily to amuse, even if it serves other functions.

MEDIA PEOPLE

Neil Postman—*Amusing Ourselves to Death*

In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death,* media scholar Neil Postman argues that the primary effect of television is that it changes how people see the world; that is, with television, people start viewing everything as entertainment. People watch the news the same way they watch MTV. They learn about politics on the same channel that shows *Monday Night Football.* They see news about an earthquake in Mexico City, followed by a commercial for Calvin Klein jeans.

Postman believes that it is impossible to take news seriously when broadcasters interrupt it at regular intervals to show entertaining commercials. He argues that in attempting to attract the largest possible audience, television inevitably trivializes important issues. This claim is supported by a study of media users conducted in 2000 that found that 75 percent of television viewers under the age of 30 watch the news with the remote in their hands, ready to change channels if they get bored for a moment or two.

Source: Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business* (New York: Penguin, 1985).

Summary

Americans are constantly using media—from the time they get up in the morning until they go to bed at night. The average person consumes media in one form or another for approximately 12 hours a day.[55]

Communication takes place at a number of levels, including intrapersonal (within the self), interpersonal (between individuals), group (between three or more individuals), and mass (between a single sender and a large audience). Mass communication is a communication process that covers an entire society, in which an individual or institution uses technology to sends messages to a large, mixed audience most of whose members are not known to the sender. It can be examined using the SMCR sender, message, channel, receiver (SMCR) model.

The first communication network was developed by the Roman Catholic Church, which as early as the 12th century could send messages reliably throughout Europe. In the mid-15th century, the development of printing made it possible for books and other publications to be mass-produced for the first time, thus leading to numerous cultural changes. Books, magazines, newspapers, and other printed forms became readily available, although they were expensive before steam-driven printing presses became common in the 19th century.

The electronic media emerged in the mid-19th century with the invention of the telegraph, followed by recorded music, radio, movies, and television. These allowed popular culture to be produced commercially and to be delivered easily and inexpensively into people's homes. The first interactive digital communication network, the Internet, came under development in the late 1960s but wasn't available to the general public until the

1990s. The Internet added a return channel to the mass communication process, thus initiating a much higher level of audience feedback. The Internet also allowed individuals to disseminate their own ideas and information without the costs of a traditional mass medium.

The rapid growth of the mass media has led the public and media critics to raise questions about the effects various media might have on society and individuals. Scholars have suggested that the best way to control the impact of the media in our lives is to develop high levels of media literacy—an understanding of what the media are, how they operate, what messages they are delivering, what roles they play in society, and how audience members respond to these messages. Media literacy includes cognitive, emotional, aesthetic, and moral dimensions.

Understanding the effects of media on individuals requires that we examine the messages being sent, the medium transmitting them, the owners of the media, and the audience members themselves. The effects can be cognitive, attitudinal, behavioral, and psychological. Media effects can also be examined in terms of societal functions of the media: surveillance, correlation, socialization, and entertainment.

Building Media Literacy Skills

Media Use Diary

The goal of this exercise is to learn more about your own media behavior in terms of how you use the media and how much you use them.

For one week, keep a diary in which you log all your media use. Record the medium you used, when you used it, and what kind of material you were consuming (i.e., what show you were watching, which book you were reading). After you have completed the diary, calculate the total amount of time you spent with each medium: newspapers, books (including textbooks), magazines, recorded music, radio, television, movies, and the Internet. Then write a 500-word essay that draws some conclusions about how you use the media, what benefits you derive from the media, and how you think your media consumption might affect you.

Alternative Methods of Encoding and Decoding Media Messages

The goal of this exercise is to learn more about how the transmission of a message affects how you perceive and react to it. Review the section of this chapter called Elements of Mass Communication. From your reading, you know that the type of medium you use will affect how you receive the message. With this exercise you are going to experience alternative ways of receiving mass communication messages. Do one of the following:

• Watch a video, DVD, or television show with your TV's closed captioning turned on and the sound turned off. (Check your television's instruction manual for how to turn on the closed captioning. You may also use the subtitles on a DVD with the sound turned off.) Record the title of what you watched, what channel it was on or where you got it, and the date and time you watched it. You can learn more about the captioning process at the National Captioning Institute's website (www.ncicap.org).

- Watch a show that features "described video." Described video is the other side of closed captioning—the visual information from television programs is described to those who can't see. This technology originated at public television station WGBH in Boston in an effort to expand program accessibility. Described video is currently available for some programs on PBS and Nickelodeon, and on many DVDs (including *Dr. Seuss' How the Grinch Stole Christmas*). If described video is available for a program, it will be broadcast as the secondary audio program (SAP) on stereo television sets. Listen to at least half an hour with your eyes closed. Record the title of the show, what channel it was on or where you got it, and when you watched it.

- Listen to at least half an hour of a book on tape by one of your favorite authors. Record the title of the book, the name of the author, and where you got it.

Remember, the goal of this exercise is not to understand what it is like to be blind or deaf; rather, it is to experience alternate forms of media transmission. In a brief essay (400–500 words), explain what you did and what you learned from the experience. How was your media experience different from your usual way of consuming programming? What did you gain from the new methods of encoding? What did you lose?

Key Terms

mass media 10
SMCR model 10
message 11
encoding 11
channel 12
receiver 12
decoding 12
heterogeneous audience 13
anonymous audience 13

media literacy 19
geographics 26
demographics 26
psychographics 26
surveillance 27
status conferral 27
correlation 27
socialization 28
entertainment 28

Electronic Resources

Online Learning Center with PowerWeb www.mhhe.com/hanson

Visit the student portion of the Online Learning Center and access the Interactive Timeline and other Internet exercises for Chapter 1. Following are highlights of these supplemental review activities.

Internet Connection

Apply your understanding of the four functions of media—surveillance, correlation, socialization, and entertainment—by examining several selected online newspapers listed here.

PowerWeb Connection

Like it or not, television is a huge part of our lives. Read the article, "TV Without Guilt: Group Portrait With Television" by David Finkel, and consider some critical thinking questions about the impact of TV.

Media World CD-ROM

Media Talk

1. How does television influence society's beliefs and anxieties? View track 14, *Michael Moore Discusses Columbine and Mass Media* and consider several issues related to television's influence.

2. How will new technology continue to change the nature of TV? View track 16, *Future Television* for a glimpse of things to come.