



1 part

Overview

This first part of *Mass Media in a Changing World*, containing just one chapter, introduces some of the key terms and concepts that will be dealt with throughout the book. This chapter explains why we study media, and places the study of media in context with the rest of the field of communication. It provides a brief introduction to media history, industry structure, and controversies, all of which will be expanded upon in subsequent chapters.

1 Overview

Introduction

Media in a Changing World

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

MEDIA LITERACY: The introductory course in mass communication has two primary objectives: to sharpen students' critical skills, and to prepare students for careers in mass media. Critics and practitioners often take opposite sides in media controversies.

BASIC TERMS: Mass communication is just one form of mediated communication. It differs from interpersonal communication in a number of essential ways.

HISTORY: New media technologies often change society in subtle and unexpected ways.

INDUSTRY: The U.S. media dominate globally; other countries sometimes resent this dominance. Reasons for the growth of media corporations include economies of scale, synergy, and global competition.

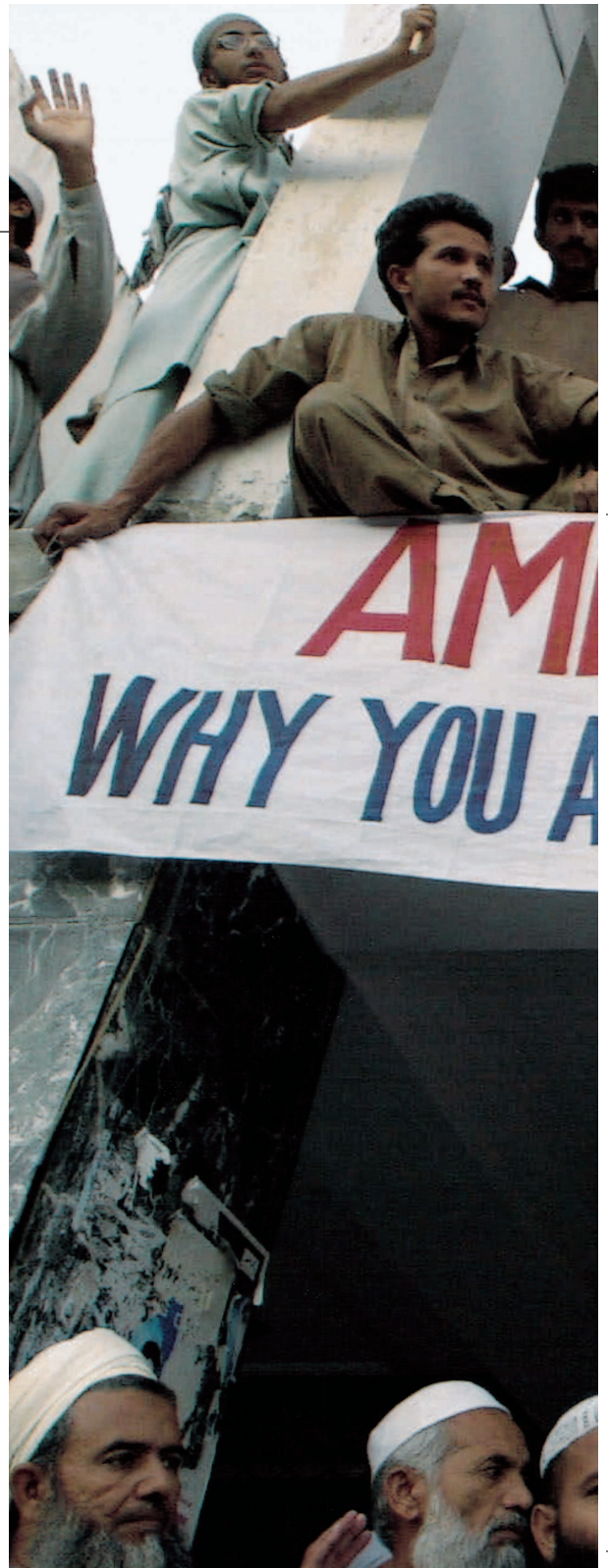
CONTROVERSIES: Media controversies are based on impact, legal, and ethical issues. In many ways, these are related issues.

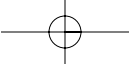
Hating America

Anti-Americanism?

Nothing has so stunned Americans in the 21st century as the idea that people of other countries dislike them, sometimes enough to devote their lives to killing American civilians.

Any doubts about the existence of anti-Americanism were dispelled by the September 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. The attacks

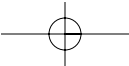




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chapter

Pro-Taliban supporters cheer during a rally in the center of Islamabad, Pakistan, on September 17, 2001. America was still reeling from the 9-11 attacks.



were planned for maximum media coverage, as well as for maximum civilian casualties. The terrorists timed their assault so that every television and radio outlet in the country was covering

demonstrations on the streets of dozens of countries, including nations that had been considered America's strongest friends, such as England, Germany, and Japan.

Critics believe that corporate control of the media is responsible for the misinformation that Americans believe.

the first airliner's crash into the center's Tower 1 as a second airliner hit Tower 2. Within minutes, a stunned television audience was watching as people in the towers jumped 1,000 feet to certain death. Nearly 3,000 innocent people died in the attack—more fatalities than occurred during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. While still reeling from the tragedy, American audiences were additionally shocked by news clips of a small group of people in the Middle East celebrating the attacks.

The anti-American reactions overseas grew worse as America responded to the terrorist attacks. The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001 and, after a long buildup, the March 2003 incursion into Iraq resulted in

The news coverage overseas differed markedly from the coverage at home. Aljazeera, the all-news cable TV network based in Qatar, broadcast graphic pictures of civilian victims of the war against Iraq that were never seen on American TV. As American stations were calling the Iraqi action a "war of liberation," Aljazeera was calling it an "invasion." Aljazeera was reporting that American officials "claimed" certain facts while Iraqi officials "reported" theirs. American media did the opposite. Even the media of formerly friendly countries seemed to turn against the United States. A cover picture in the German newsweekly *Der Spiegel* showed explosions in Baghdad under the caption "Terror Bombing for Freedom."

How could the perceptions of people overseas be so different from those of people in America? Many Americans just assumed that the media of other countries were biased against the United States and that the people of those countries were therefore uninformed. But research conducted by American universities suggested that many Americans were also uninformed. One study, for example, showed that in the days leading up to the war in Iraq, 48 percent of Americans thought that the United States had established the existence of a close link between Iraq and al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the September 11 attacks; 22 percent thought the United States had found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; and 25 percent believed that most countries in the world supported the U.S. military action against Iraq.¹ Many critics believed that corporate control of the media was responsible for the misinformation that Americans believed.²

It was indeed a confusing time in the world of media.



Media Literacy

The differences between U.S. and overseas media coverage of America's war on terror highlight how confusing the world of media can be. What roles do media bias and corporate control play in the way media work? What lessons can history teach us about the way media operate today? What are the foundations of today's media controversies? Answering questions like these is one aspect of what has come to be called media literacy. If literacy is the ability to read and write, **media literacy** is the ability to understand and make productive use of the media in our lives.

There are at least two different but related perspectives to media literacy: media criticism and career preparation.

MEDIA CRITICISM

Media criticism is the analysis used to assess the effects of media on individuals, on societies, and on cultures. Media criticism doesn't necessarily have to be negative, but it does have to consist of analysis based on well-reasoned argument.

Many students are interested in media criticism in their roles as consumers, and some are concerned about their present or future roles as parents. In the primary grades, instruction in media criticism centers on making children careful consumers of media messages; the goal is to help them realize that they can react logically to the emotional messages of the media. At this level, media criticism lessons are designed to teach children that advertisements really do sometimes try to sell them things they don't need. On the secondary level, high school kids begin to learn about how the various media influence society and how media messages can contribute to a teenager's self-image. High school media studies might deal with how movies tend to make smokers look cool or how an excessively skinny body is promoted as an ideal.

On the college level, instruction in media criticism goes a step further in providing tools for the in-depth analysis of the messages of mass communication. In the introductory course in media criticism, college students begin to examine the relationships among media history, current industry practices, and controversies, as well as how laws and ethics relate to the impact of media. Many students find that an increased awareness of the inner workings of their favorite media makes their use of those media more interesting and more significant. Using media is something most people will do for the rest of their lives, so the prospect of making that use more meaningful is often compelling. Students who have taken media pretty much for granted, and have accepted a view that is essentially uncritical and unreflective, often find the introductory course in mass communication to be an eye-opener.

CAREER PREPARATION

Part of media literacy is learning how to use media. Practical use is of most interest to students who want to explore media careers. These might be careers in the media spotlight—as a newscaster or reporter, for example—or behind-the-scenes employment in film production, book editing, advertising, Web site creation, or scores of other careers. This book provides an overview of the various industries in mass communication and suggests

media literacy

The ability to understand and make productive use of the media.

media criticism

The analysis used to assess the effects of media on individuals, on societies, and on cultures.

career possibilities by giving a general blueprint for how the various industries work.

Even students who have their eye set on a career in a particular medium—film production or newspaper journalism, for example—often find it helpful to learn how the other media operate. A surprising number of students aiming for a particular career in mass communication wind up in a different but related field (such as the many journalism students who find themselves in public relations jobs), so a well-rounded study of media fields in general often turns out to be useful. In addition, many nonmedia careers turn out to have a media component. Many a corporate executive, for example, learns that a successful career will involve working with the media to get a business message out to the public.

THE CRITIC VERSUS THE PRACTITIONER

The two different approaches to the study of media—as criticism and career preparation—lead to different ways of looking at media. Often media professionals will find media criticism to be unduly harsh and unrealistic, whereas media critics will find the bottom-line approach of professionals to be simplistic and detrimental to society. This book tries to present both sides of this dichotomy, so you will often read here the phrases “critics say” or

consider this

Students tend to approach the study of mass communication as either future practitioners or future consumers/critics. Which camp do you consider yourself to be in? How might this affect your reception of critical or industry information in this book?

“critics believe” as well as “media practitioners say” or “media professionals believe,” to introduce ideas and explanations from the two points of view. Students are invited to reach their own conclusions about which side is right in each controversy. The important thing here is to analyze media through well-informed critical thinking. That is a skill that will be of great value to both future practitioners and future critics.

BASIC TERMS

We begin the study of mass communication by defining some terms that will concern us throughout this book.

Communication

Before we begin to look at media, we need to consider the concept of communication. This term has many meanings, and has been used to refer to interaction between animals and machines as well as people. For our purposes, however, **communication** refers to the process of human beings sharing messages. The messages might be entertainment, information, or persuasion; they might be verbal or visual, intentional or unintentional. In fact, they might have a different meaning to the people sending them than to those who receive them. Courses in interpersonal, group, public and mass communication are all given on the college level. Interpersonal communication usually refers to individuals interacting face-to-face. Group communication is also called small group communication when there are few enough members to interact face-to-face, and organizational communication when the groups are large enough to need to communicate through devices like e-mail and telephones. Public communication focuses on public speaking, a subject that has been taught at the college level since ancient times. All of these types of communication are represented by a basic model of the com-

communication

The process of human beings sharing messages.

munication process, in which one person (a source) sends a message through a channel, to another person (a receiver). **Feedback** is defined as messages that return from the receiver of a message to the source of that message. Anything that interferes with this process is called **noise**, which includes psychological noise when it occurs internally, such as daydreams, worries, or being offended by the message, and environmental noise when it occurs externally, such as a younger sibling screaming across the room. If these terms sound rather technical, it is because they were originated by mathematicians working on formulas for types of electronic communication.³ This model (see Figure 1.1) is used to explain all types of communication. It helps clarify, for example, how a message sent out by a source might be interpreted differently by a receiver because of noise.⁴

Mediated Communication

Mediated communication is any type of sharing of messages conveyed through an interposed device, or **medium**, rather than face-to-face. **Media**, the plural form of *medium*, refers collectively to the print media (books, magazines, and newspapers); broadcast media (television and radio); digital media (the Internet and any medium that uses computer-based technology); and the entertainment media (all of these, plus movies, recordings, and video games). The word *media* is sometimes used in the singular, as in “The media provides little of value” or “The media is a wonderful source of entertainment.” Most experts believe that such usage not only is grammatically incorrect but also suggests a lack of understanding about how diverse the various media are.

When most people talk about “the media” they are referring to the channels of mass communication such as television and radio. However, not all media are used to reach mass audiences. Although mediated communication includes mass communication, it also includes mediated interpersonal communication and communication through converged media that are both mass and interpersonal. (*Convergence* is discussed later in this chapter.)

feedback

Messages that return from the receiver of a message to the source of that message.

noise

Anything that interferes with the communication process.

mediated communication

Messages conveyed through an interposed device rather than face-to-face.

medium

An interposed device used to transmit messages.

media

Plural of *medium*.

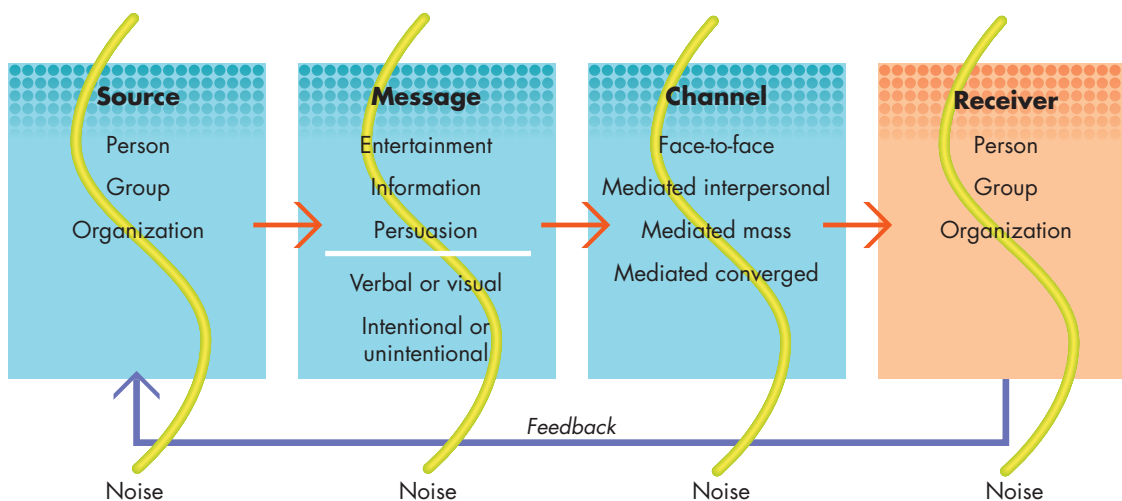


FIGURE 1.1 Basic Model of Human Communication This basic model of human communication shows how components such as source, message, channel, receiver, feedback, and noise are interrelated.



Some students are interested in media criticism because they are concerned about their present or future roles as parents.

advertisers, for example, gauge the impact of their messages by tracking sales of advertised products, and television producers depend on ratings data such as the Nielsen ratings.

Mass Communication

Mass communication consists of mediated messages that are transmitted to large, usually widespread audiences (see Figure 1.2). Mass communication differs from interpersonal communication (interaction between individuals) in several ways.

Mass Media Do Not Talk Back

First, mass communication differs from interpersonal communication in that the former allows little or no contact or interaction between the sender of the message and individual audience members. Feedback, those messages that return to the source of a message from the receiver of a message, is restricted in most forms of mass communication. You might be able to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or the creator of your favorite Web site, but you could wait a long time to receive a response. Furthermore, the editor or creator would feel less pressure to respond to you than in a face-to-face encounter. Most feedback in mass communication is indirect;

Gatekeepers Determine What Messages Are Sent

A second important difference between mass and interpersonal communication is that most messages that succeed in gathering large, diverse audiences are usually developed, or at least financed by, skilled professionals working for large organizations. The producers of mass messages are often called **gatekeepers**, because they determine what messages will be delivered to media consumers, how those messages will be constructed, and when they will be delivered (see Figure 1.2). Sponsors, editors, producers, reporters, and executives all have the power to influence mass messages. These messages are shaped by a wide range of economic, ethical, and legal considerations that will be discussed later in this chapter as well as throughout this book.

Mass Media Have Wide Impact

Finally, mass communication has the potential for far greater impact than interpersonal communication, if only because of the larger audience and the professional nature of the messages. This impact might be seen in audience pleasure or buying behavior, or it might be seen in an unintentional effect such as a young child's imitating the violent behavior seen in a favorite TV show or video game. As the model of mass communication in Figure 1.2 suggests, this impact becomes part of the feedback sent to the source, perhaps as news reports about studies into the effects of media. We'll have much to say about media impact throughout this book.

mass communication

Mediated messages transmitted to large, widespread audiences.

gatekeepers

Those who determine what messages will be delivered to media consumers.

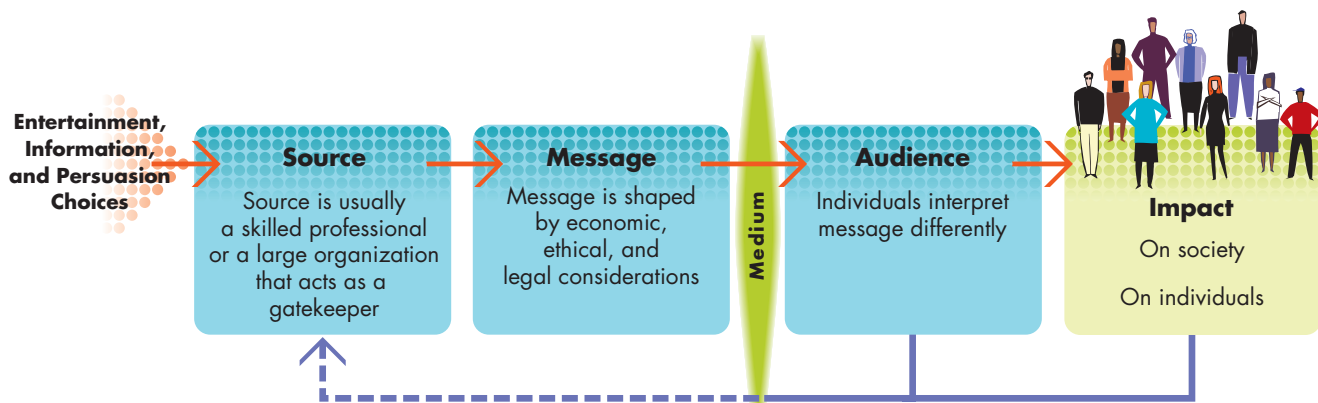


FIGURE 1.2 Basic Model of Mass Communication This model emphasizes the role of the gatekeeper and the restricted nature of feedback in mass communication. The gatekeeper chooses from the unlimited array of entertainment, information, and persuasion that audience members might be exposed to. Feedback from audience members is restricted. Media impact affects both individuals and society, and also acts as a form of feedback.

Mediated Interpersonal Communication

Mediated interpersonal communication is the sharing of personal messages through some form of interposed device. We speak to close friends over the telephone, we e-mail friends and send instant messages across the nation and around the world, and we might even send a videotape to far-off relatives. Mediated interpersonal communication does not involve face-to-face contact; even with a videophone, you are merely talking to a facsimile of another person. Mediated interpersonal communication is also different from mass communication. In mediated interpersonal communication, a message doesn't go out to a large audience, it isn't produced by professionals, and it allows a considerable amount of interaction and feedback (although not as much as face-to-face communication).

consider this

Have media had an impact on your life? In what way or ways? In answering this question, consider all of the media you use, including print media, broadcast media, digital media, and entertainment media.

self quiz

In what ways does mass communication differ from interpersonal communication?

Converging Communication Media

The distinction between mass and interpersonal communication is much fuzzier today than in the past. Digital technology is creating a new kind of mediated communication. The word *convergence* refers to any type of coming together. In media studies, **convergence** refers to the merging of computer, telephone, and mass media technologies.⁵ Converging media bring mediated interpersonal messages, including telephone and e-mail, together in the same devices as mass communication.

The Internet—or, more precisely, the communication network known as the World Wide Web—is a prime example of a converging medium. On the one hand, the Web is used for interpersonal communication. It is our conduit for e-mail, chat groups, and instant messages. Electronic discussion groups, organized by and for people with a specific interest, address an astonishing range of topics, from antique cash registers to Lithuanian literature to hip-hop

mediated interpersonal communication

The sharing of personal messages through an interposed device.

convergence

The combination of computer, telephone, and mass media technologies.

on **History****Technology and Change: The Telegraph**

New media technology has changed society at many points in history. Technological events have ranged from the invention of the printing press in the 15th century to the adoption of the World Wide Web in the 1990s. The introduction of the telegraph in 1844 is especially instructive because it contributed to a new style of journalistic writing and established wire services for newspapers.

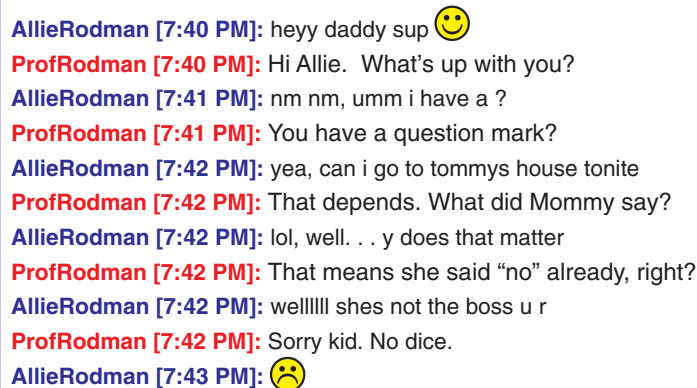
Samuel Morse, a well-known artist and inventor, worked on his telegraph throughout the 1830s, and by 1844 he had talked the U.S. Congress into financing a line from Baltimore, Maryland, to Washington, D.C. Morse's first message to Congress, sent in the code of dots and dashes that he had invented, was "What hath God wrought!" Telegraph lines carrying messages in Morse code were soon spreading across the country.

By increasing the speed of long-distance communication from that of a team of horses to that of an electric impulse, the telegraph transformed the way Americans exchanged information and did business.

News from faraway places was available very quickly, and could affect everything from a banker's choice of investments on Wall Street to an Iowa farmer's decision to plant soybeans or corn. The telegraph even changed the way people wrote, not only in journalism but also in literature. The lean, "telegraphic" writing style that the new medium encouraged eventually became fashionable and replaced the flowery, wordy writing of the 19th century. The inverted-pyramid style of news writing—in which the most important facts (the who, what, when, where, why, and how) are squeezed into the first paragraph of the story—began because of the telegraph's lack of reliability. Reporters using the telegraph had to make sure that the most important information would be transmitted before the line went down.

The telegraph made possible the formation of wire services, which were organizations that sent local newspapers stories from far away. The Associated Press of New York, the first wire service, was formed in 1848 when six New York newspapers, all of which

Instant messages are a form of mediated interpersonal communication.



AllieRodman [7:40 PM]: hey daddy sup 😊

ProfRodman [7:40 PM]: Hi Allie. What's up with you?

AllieRodman [7:41 PM]: nm nm, umm i have a ?

ProfRodman [7:41 PM]: You have a question mark?

AllieRodman [7:42 PM]: yea, can i go to tommys house tonite

ProfRodman [7:42 PM]: That depends. What did Mommy say?

AllieRodman [7:42 PM]: lol, well. . . y does that matter

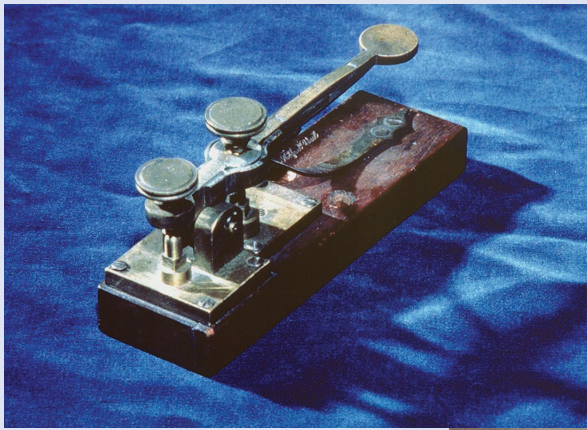
ProfRodman [7:42 PM]: That means she said "no" already, right?

AllieRodman [7:42 PM]: welllllll shes not the boss u r

ProfRodman [7:42 PM]: Sorry kid. No dice.

AllieRodman [7:43 PM]: 😞

had correspondents in Boston, agreed to share one correspondent in order to save money. The enterprise worked so well that the Associated Press (AP) became a nationwide association in which hundreds of papers shared their local news and correspondents. Before the AP, America still had a partisan press, which meant that most papers had a decidedly political point of view. With the formation of the AP, however, each paper had to make its articles appropriate for other papers, on all sides of the political spectrum. Thus began the journalistic ideal of **objectivity**, the writing style that separates fact from opinion.



This is the telegraph key used by Samuel Morse, 1844.



Samuel Morse, in an 1866 oil over photograph by Mathew Brady.

music. But the Web is also a mass medium. Both individuals and organizations can create Web sites that have the potential to reach millions of users. Elaborate Web sites created by professionals, include the sites of major corporations such as Microsoft, Time Warner, and Yahoo. We will focus on mass media and mass communication throughout this book, but a consideration of converged media will be inevitable. Converging media are creating important changes, and we can learn a lot about what to expect from these changes by examining how media have changed in the past.

MEDIA HISTORY

Each chapter of this book will contain a brief history of the topic under consideration. We study media history because very often an understanding of today's media practices can be found there. We also examine this history because the development of each medium changes society, sometimes in subtle and unexpected ways, such as the way the telegraph changed journalistic writing (see the Close-Up on History box). A brief overview of some important dates in media history is provided in the Milestones in Media History on pages 12–13. We will expand on these events in subsequent chapters, each of which will have its own Close-Up on History and Milestones in History boxes.

objectivity

Writing style that separates fact from opinion.

self quiz

What is meant by **convergence** and why is it important in mass communication?

How did the telegraph and the Associated Press change the style of journalistic writing?



milestones in media history

1456 In Germany, Johannes Gutenberg's printing press allows books to be mass-produced, and sets in motion a revolution in the way people learn and think.

1741 The first magazines in America are published, creating a new medium that has greater durability than a newspaper, but fewer pages than a book.

1450

1500

1550

1600

1650

1700

1690 *Publick Occurrences*, the first newspaper in America, is shut down by the government after one issue.

Understanding Today's Media Industries

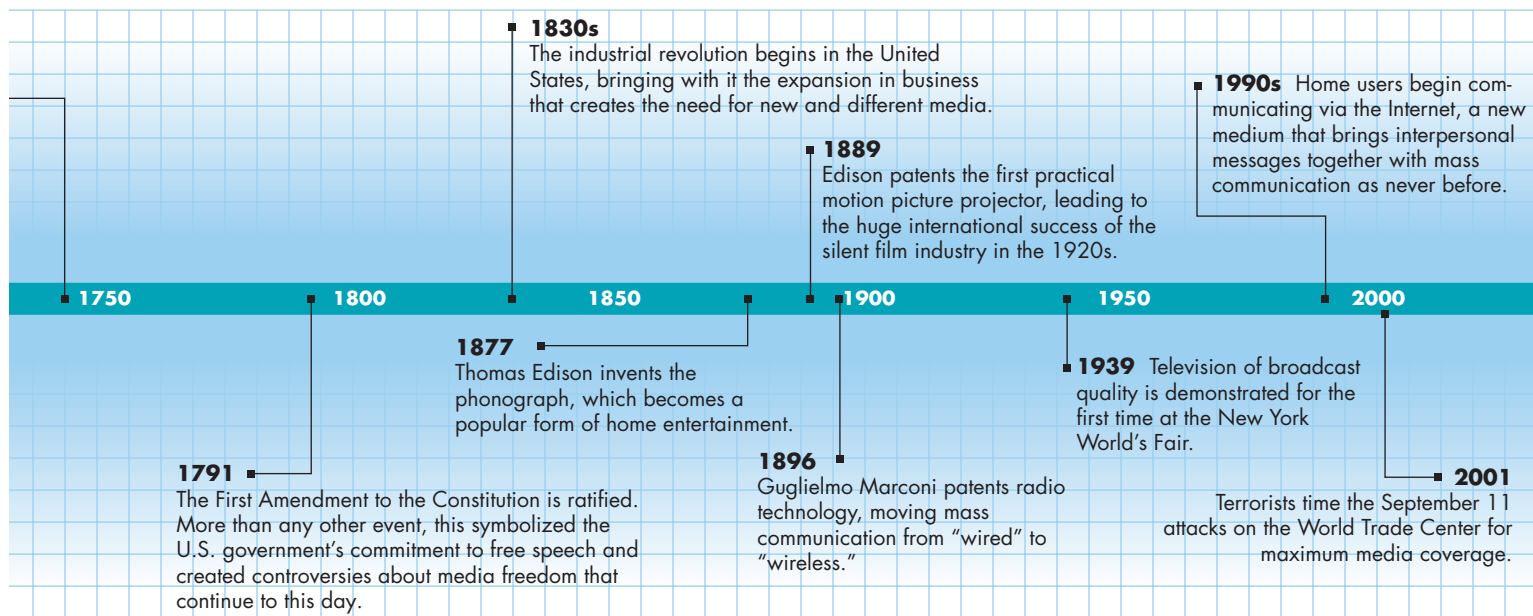
Media industries exist on a number of different levels—including local (the small-town newspaper), regional (radio station groups that cover several states), and national (the broadcast television networks)—but it is the global level that is key to understanding today's media business. Travelers abroad are often surprised to see advertisements for U.S. products like McDonald's hamburgers and Coca-Cola, and to see U.S.-style advertisements for local products, not to mention *Days of Our Lives*, *Baywatch*, and countless other television programs dubbed into the language of the country they are visiting. Many global media trends such as big-budget action-adventure movies and rap music start in America. The United States is the only country in the world that is a net exporter of mass media products such as movies, recordings, TV programs, and books—it sends out far more media materials to other countries than it imports. The U.S. trade surplus in media is in the tens of billions of dollars. The American domination of world media products has been so strong and so long-lasting (it was true for most of the 20th century) that global mass media has been called the “American Empire.”



American media products dominate the global scene. In Italy, the title of *Intolerable Cruelty* translates as “First I Marry You, Then I Ruin You.”

AMERICAN DOMINANCE OF WORLD MEDIA

There are several reasons why American media products dominate the global scene. One is the English language, which is spoken by more people worldwide than any other language. English isn't the most spoken first language (Mandarin Chinese takes that honor), but it is by far the most spoken second language, which makes it easier to export U.S. media products. There are several English-speaking countries, however, and none of them



have America's global media dominance. There are three primary reasons for this dominance: freedom of expression, audience diversity, and big business's ability to produce popular entertainment.

Freedom of Expression Has Worldwide Appeal

The freedom available to U.S. media practitioners allows a wide range of movies, books, and other media products to be created on a variety of topics, with limited interference by the government. Also, the American notion of freedom that is evident in so many of its media products has been embraced internationally, especially by young people, with freedom's inherent

The United States sends out far more media materials to other countries than it imports.

appeal to those who wish to rebel against tradition, oppressive rules, and the status quo. Many critics consider media freedom in the United States a mixed blessing, however, especially when it goes too far, such as when it exposes children to violence and pornography. Religious fundamentalists around the world have been especially offended by sexual representations in American media products. They have also complained about the glorification of criminal behavior and crass materialism in those products.

Producing for a Diverse Audience

U.S. media producers have to make products for a diverse audience that incorporates a wide range of backgrounds and tastes. American movies, recordings, books, and magazines must be sold to various ethnic, racial, and religious minorities, and to women as well as men. To this end, media producers have increasingly involved people with different backgrounds in production decisions. There is still progress to be made, however. In many media industries women and minorities are underrepresented as employees. Many critics believe that media have also been, and continue to be, used as powerful instruments for preserving the social order in which women and minorities have been relegated to subordinate positions in American society.

Still, with the progress that has been made, the chance of U.S. media products being successful overseas is far greater than those produced in less diverse societies.

Big Business and Popular Entertainment

The big-business structure of the American economy makes it possible to finance and produce expensive media products. Furthermore, the large size of the American market encourages big-budget productions. Critics contend that these impressive budgets do not always correlate to high quality, but media practitioners point out that they do seem to produce the most popular entertainment worldwide.



self quiz

What three characteristics make American media unique and contribute to their dominance overseas?

CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The global dominance of American media is often resented overseas. Many countries dislike America's incursion into their native cultures, accusing the United States of **cultural imperialism**, that is, the displacement of their traditional culture with American culture. France and Canada, for example, have both imposed limits on the importation of U.S. television programming.

A fear of cultural imperialism is often blamed for the anti-Americanism discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In 2002, the Pew Research Center for People and the Press conducted a Global Attitudes Survey and found that "America is nearly universally admired for its technological achievements and people in most countries say they enjoy U.S. movies, music and television programs." However, the survey also found that "the spread of U.S.

Many countries accuse the United States of "cultural imperialism": the displacement of their traditional culture with American culture.

ideas and customs is disliked by majorities in almost every country included in this survey. That sentiment is prevalent in friendly nations such as Canada (54 percent) and Britain (50 percent), and even more so in countries where America is broadly disliked, such as Argentina (73 percent) and Pakistan (81 percent).⁶

This would suggest a serious downside to the popularity of American cultural products overseas. For example, one expert pointed out that American movies "are seen by a lot of foreign countries as the ultimate propaganda weapon, and a device to corrupt their cultures."⁷ One study of teens from 12 countries found that many of the teens considered Americans a materialistic, sexually immoral, and often criminal people who seek to dominate other cultures. This study found popular media at least partly to blame for that perception.⁸

FOREIGN MEDIA IN THE UNITED STATES

In spite of the global dominance of U.S. media, the foreign media have had great influence in the United States. Films from other lands, including France, Italy, and China, are often of exceptional quality and inspire American directors, many of whom come from abroad. British groups have been extremely influential in the pop music scene, and you only have to watch Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) channels to see the British influence in U.S. television programming. Even in commercial TV, hits such as



On the *Media World* CD that accompanies this book (Track 19), Tom Brokaw investigates why the United States is viewed poorly overseas.

cultural imperialism

The displacement of a nation's customs with those of another country.

American Idol, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, and *The Weakest Link* all began in England.

The globalization of media businesses is also by no means one-way. Foreign companies have purchased a considerable portion of America's media. Two of the top five book publishing houses are now owned by German and British companies. Japan's Sony Corporation owns a major movie studio (formerly Columbia Pictures) and a major U.S. music producer (formerly called CBS Records). Five of the six largest recording companies are foreign owned. The News Corporation, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch, an Australian, owns dozens of U.S. newspapers and magazines, as well as the Fox television and movie operations. Several foreign corporations own advertising companies in the United States.

Many critics are less concerned about foreign ownership of U.S. media than they are about the sheer size of international media conglomerates. It is important to understand both why media businesses grow large and who owns them.

REASONS FOR CORPORATE MEDIA GROWTH

Simply stated, media businesses have a tendency to grow large because they can make more money that way. The three primary reasons why growth is profitable involve economies of scale, synergy, and global competition.

Economies of Scale Increase Profits

Economies of scale are the savings that come with mass production. When large numbers of units are produced, each unit costs less. Not even the richest show-off in the world would pay \$60 million to watch a movie, yet that is the cost of the first copy of a typical Hollywood movie today. Each subsequent copy only costs a few thousand dollars and is viewed by thousands of people. In the same way, the first copy of the typical daily newspaper costs tens of thousands of dollars, but after thousands of copies are made each copy costs pennies. This rule of first-copy cost is true in all media. The first book, magazine, recording, or television program has an enormous cost, including payments to creative personnel such as writers, editors, and actors.

A company that is big enough to make lots of copies of something is able to make those copies cheaply and earn high profits on them. Thus, a newspaper that buys up a competitor is probably buying that paper's customers more than its equipment, real estate, and personnel. If the company can simply sell the same paper it was originally producing to twice as many customers, it can often double its profit. This is one reason why media takeovers and mergers are frequently accompanied by news of massive layoffs of employees—those people are part of the “savings” in economies of scale. Right after America Online (AOL) and Time Warner merged in 2001, for example, 2,000 people were immediately laid off. When NBC merged with Universal in 2004, the new conglomerate announced similar potential “savings.”

Synergy: Parts Working Together

Synergy, which comes from the Greek word meaning “to work together,” refers to any combination of forces that results in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. One form of synergy is seen in the creative bonus that results from combining personnel with two different types of knowledge or skills. This kind of synergy can be seen in a college environment when a group of students works together on a class project. Such a group allows

economies of scale

Savings that accrue with mass production.

synergy

A combination in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts.

people with different talents to inspire each other to new levels of creativity and productivity; they produce more as a group than they could as individuals working alone.

Businesses merge with other businesses to take advantage of this phenomenon. NBC Television had synergy in mind in 2001 when it bought Telemundo, a Spanish cable network; NBC wanted to combine its programming executives with Telemundo's experts in reaching the international Spanish-speaking audience. Not all plans for synergy work out, however. When AOL merged with Time Warner in 2001, both sides were looking for the synergy that would result when AOL's Internet experts began working with Time Warner's information and entertainment experts. The merger cost stockholders billions of dollars when AOL's business lost value and Time Warner could do nothing to help it. (AOL's profits came mostly from providing dial-up Internet connections, which became less popular when high-speed connections became available.)

Another form of synergy results when selling the product in one form promotes sales of the product in some other form, a process sometimes called **cross-merchandizing** or cross-promotion. Book companies published some of the earliest magazines and used them to promote their products. Movie studios buy publishing houses so that they can sell their stories in both movie and print forms. Many movies are made from books, and a movie's success will increase sales of the book significantly. All media are related in this way. Television networks purchase much of their programming from movie studios, and radio stations are largely dependent on recorded music.

Global Competition Favors Larger Companies

Another reason media companies seek to grow large is to confront global competition. Disney competes with Time Warner and Sony not just in the United States but all over the world; these companies believe that they have to be big to compete on the global stage. Competition is especially fierce in media industries, in which a large percentage of new products have a tendency to fail. Most movies lose money, as do most books, recordings, and television programs. Most new magazines fail within a year or two. New products have to be developed constantly, and when one of them becomes a moneymaker, the corporation has to exploit it in as many markets as possible. When the Harry Potter books became fantastically successful, for example, Time Warner was able to produce blockbuster films and sell related toys throughout the world.

self quiz

What are the reasons for corporate media growth, and how does each of these reasons relate to media products?

cross-merchandizing

Promoting a product in one form to sell it in some other form.

group ownership

The acquisition of the same type of business in more than one market area by one company.

PATTERNS OF OWNERSHIP

As media businesses grow, they become structured in various patterns of ownership, including groups, conglomerates, monopolies, and oligopolies.

Groups and Chains

One way that media companies grow is through **group ownership** (also called chain ownership), a system in which one company owns the same type of medium in more than one market area. Many newspapers are part of a group; the Gannett Corporation, which publishes *USA Today*, owns a group of 100 newspapers. Television stations are also owned in groups (in-

TABLE 1.1 Vertical Integration Vertical integration occurs when companies own both production and distribution facilities, as in any of the *columns* in this table.

Books	Newspapers/ Magazines	Movies/ Television	Recordings/ Radio	Internet
Literary agencies	News services/ syndicates	Talent agencies	Talent agencies	Web site designers
Publishing houses	Publishers	Studios	Record labels	Web portals
Printers/paper mills	Printers/paper mills	Film/video manufacturers	Recording manufacturers	Information services
Book clubs	Subscription/ delivery services	Distributors/networks	Record clubs/networks	Internet service providers
Bookstores	Newsstands	Theaters/stations	Record stores/stations	E-commerce sites

cluding the Gannett group, which owns 22 of them), as are radio stations (Clear Channel owns 1,200); movie studios (Disney owns four); and movie theaters (General Cinema, Cineplex-Odeon, and United Artists each own thousands).

Conglomerates

Conglomerates are large companies involved in many different types of businesses. Conglomerates form in various ways. One way is through vertical integration.

Vertical Integration Includes Parts of the Same Business

Vertical integration is a business model in which a company owns different parts of the same industry, thus controlling both production and distribution facilities (see Table 1.1). When a newspaper publisher buys a paper plant, an ink plant, a trucking company, and a string of newsstands, that company becomes vertically integrated. NBC integrated vertically when it bought Universal Studios, giving it both the Universal production facilities and the NBC television network and cable channels (including Bravo and Telemundo) to distribute the programming that Universal produces.

There is nothing illegal about vertical integration as long as it is not used to compete unfairly against other companies. When a firm vertically integrates for the sole purpose of making it impossible for other companies to compete with them, however, **antitrust laws** are activated. In the 1940s five large movie studios bought up 70 percent of U.S. movie theaters and collaborated to control which films were shown, where, and for how long. They made it impossible for competitors' films to be shown anywhere. The government prosecuted the studios for antitrust violations and forced them to sell their theaters. In that case, the government found that the movie studios were using their vertical integration "in restraint of trade," which is legal jargon for "to destroy the competition," which, according to the antitrust laws,



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conglomerates

Large companies that own many different types of businesses.

vertical integration

Ownership of various stages of production and distribution of a product.

antitrust laws

Laws that prohibit monopolistic practices in restraint of trade.

TABLE 1.2 Horizontal Integration Horizontal integration occurs when a company owns many different types of businesses, as in any of the rows in this table.

Books	Newspapers/ Magazines	Movies/ Television	Recordings/ Radio	Internet
Literary agencies	News services/ syndicates	Talent agencies	Talent agencies	Web site designers
Publishing houses	Publishers	Studios	Record labels	Web portals
Printers/paper mills	Printers/paper mills	Film/video manufacturers	Recording manufacturers	Information services
Book clubs	Subscription/ delivery services	Distributors/ networks	Record clubs/ networks	Internet service providers
Bookstores	Newsstands	Theaters/ stations	Record stores/ stations	E-commerce sites

is illegal. For example, Clear Channel is the largest owner of both radio stations and concert productions. When the company was accused of keeping artists that signed with other concert promoters off its radio playlists in 2004, the government initiated an antitrust lawsuit against Clear Channel.⁹

Horizontal Integration Involves Different Types of Businesses

Another way conglomerates form is through **horizontal integration**, which occurs when a company buys many different types of businesses (see Table 1.2). In the case of horizontal media integration, the newspaper company

Concentration of media ownership can result in one company's having too much power to sway public opinion.

doesn't buy a paper mill, it buys a radio station or a TV station. Horizontal integration occurs in media businesses when one company wants to sell its properties and products across different types of media. When a television network buys a publishing company to produce books about its television shows, it is integrating horizontally.

A broader form of horizontal integration occurs when a company owns businesses outside of the world of communication. For example, NBC is owned by General Electric (GE), which makes not only light bulbs but also engines for the F-16 Fighter jet, the Abrams tank, the Apache helicopter, the U2 Bomber, and the Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV). Critics are especially concerned about this broader type of horizontal integration, because it means that GE's journalism units are reporting on a wide variety of topics (such as debates about military spending) that affect the conglomerate's other businesses.

Combined Integration Is Most Common

Most conglomerates combine horizontal and vertical integration. The Disney Corporation, for example, owns not only a group of movie studios but also movie theme parks where cartoon movie characters like Mickey Mouse and Snow White are featured and the topics of the movies become attractions. In fact, the movie *Pirates of the Caribbean* (2003) was based on a long-standing

horizontal integration
Corporate growth through the acquisition of different types of businesses.

Disney theme-park ride. Disney also owns recording studios that sell movie soundtracks and publishing companies that produce books and magazines about their movies and movie characters. It even owns a professional hockey team, the Mighty Ducks, which was a subject of one of its movies. These are classic forms of horizontal integration. But Disney also owns the ABC television network and several cable channels that show its movies, as well as video companies that distribute those movies in video form. And it owns a chain of retail stores that sell its videos, recordings, and books. Because these businesses are involved in both the production and distribution of Disney films, they are classic forms of vertical integration. Both vertical and horizontal integration of large conglomerates worry critics who believe that concentration of media ownership results in one company's having too much power to sway public opinion.

self quiz

What is the difference between horizontal and vertical integration of media companies?



Monopolies

A **monopoly** is one company that dominates an entire industry. Monopolies can occur locally, regionally, nationally, or globally. The Microsoft Corporation currently has a global monopoly in computer operating systems: More than 90 percent of all computers are equipped with one of Microsoft's Windows systems. AT&T was a national telephone monopoly until 1984, when it was broken up into regional companies following a lengthy government antitrust action. Many local newspapers are monopolies in their communities. Some monopolies, such as local cable and telephone systems, were planned in conjunction with local governments. To entice companies to build the initial system, the community granted them the monopoly, promising that no competing company would be allowed in. Most planned monopolies are regulated in some way. Early telephone and cable companies, for example, had regulated rates. A monopoly becomes illegal only when it performs an action in restraint of trade, which, as mentioned earlier, is defined as unfairly seeking to destroy another company.

consider this

Media conglomerates are getting bigger and bigger, with more and more media companies concentrating into fewer hands. Do you think this a positive or a negative trend? Why?

Oligopolies

An **oligopoly** is a economic situation in which a small number of companies dominate an industry. Many media industries today are essentially oligopolies. Six movie studios receive 90 percent of American film revenues, and four major music studios receive 80 percent of recording revenues. There are just six major book publishers, and the television industry was an oligopoly of three networks—ABC, CBS, and NBC—from the 1950s through the 1970s. Television has diversified since then, especially because of cable, but today it is still mostly an oligopoly of five companies: Disney/ABC, Viacom/CBS, NBC Universal, Time Warner, and Fox/News Corporation (see Fact File 1.1).

Entrepreneurial Start-Ups

As powerful as media conglomerates are, not all media are in the hands of giant corporations. Some are owned by entrepreneurs (from the French for “enterpriser”). An **entrepreneur**, defined as an individual who invests the time and money to start a new business, is usually someone who is willing

monopoly

One company that dominates an entire industry.

oligopoly

A small number of companies that dominate an industry.

entrepreneur

An individual who risks the time and money to start a new business.

Media Conglomerates

These five media conglomerates control an enormous number of well-known properties. They are all products of both vertical and horizontal integration.

Company	Some Holdings of Interest
Time Warner (www.timewarner.com)	<p>Movie studios: Warner Bros., Castle Rock, New Line, MGM</p> <p>Radio network: CNN</p> <p>Television: cable systems, television production studios, PrimeStar Satellite TV, CNN Airport Network, AOL-TV</p> <p>Sports teams and events: Atlanta Braves, Atlanta Hawks, Goodwill Games</p> <p>Magazines: <i>Time</i>, <i>Life</i>, <i>People</i>, <i>Sports Illustrated</i>, and 26 others</p> <p>Book publishing: Warner Books; Little, Brown, and Co.; Time-Life Books, Book-of-the-Month Club</p> <p>Internet companies: America Online (with 25 million members), CompuServe (with 3 million), AOL International (with services in 10 countries and 5 languages); Netscape, and ICQ (an instant messaging system)</p> <p>E-commerce: Digital City, Moviefone, MapQuest, and dozens of other major partnerships</p> <p>Web sites: CNN.com, All Politics.com, and others</p>
Viacom/CBS (www.viacom.com, www.cbs.com)	<p>Viacom</p> <p>Movie studios: Paramount Pictures and Paramount Home Video</p> <p>Viacom movie theaters</p> <p>Blockbuster Video stores</p> <p>Television production: Paramount Television, Spelling Entertainment, and Big Ticket Television</p> <p>Television network: UPN</p> <p>Cable networks: MTV, Nickelodeon, The Movie Channel, Showtime, FLIX, VH1, All News Channel</p> <p>Book publishing: The Free Press, Pocket Books</p> <p>Theme parks and rides.</p> <p>CBS</p> <p>Television stations and a television network</p> <p>Infinity Broadcasting (radio stations and the CBS, NBC, and Westwood One networks, among others)</p> <p>Cable networks: The Nashville Network, Country Music Television, CBS Eye on People, Home Team Sports</p> <p>Billboards and transit advertising</p>

to take a considerable risk on a new idea. Some media, such as broadcast, cable, or satellite properties, are now so expensive that only the richest individuals or corporations could own them, and even then the majority of start-ups fail. There is still some opportunity for entrepreneurial start-ups, however.

As large corporations buy up their successful competition, it often creates opportunities for entrepreneurs to step in and fill a need. Entrepreneurs have started successful local newspapers and book publishing houses. They start up hundreds of new magazines each year. Entrepreneurs have formed small movie companies and made successful films for a small fraction of what a Hollywood film costs. There have been numerous entrepreneurial start-ups in the advertising business, where small boutique agencies have been established in living rooms. The computer and Internet industries have

Company	Some Holdings of Interest
<p>The Walt Disney Company (www.disney.go.com)</p>	<p>Movie studios: Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Hollywood Pictures, Miramax Film Corporation, Buena Vista home video Radio stations and a radio network Music labels: Hollywood, Mammoth, Walt Disney Records Sports teams: Anaheim Mighty Ducks, Anaheim Angels Theme parks and resorts: Disney World, Disneyland, Disneyland Paris, Tokyo Disneyland, Disney Vacation Club, Disney Cruiseline A Broadway theater 3 magazines 10 daily papers Celebration, a theme community in Orlando, Florida</p>
<p>News Corporation (www.newscorp.com)</p>	<p>Movie studios: 20th Century Fox Studios and Fox Studios Television: Fox television studios, Fox television network, Fox television stations; satellite and cable systems on five continents; Fox Movie Channel; Fox Sports Channels; FX Channel; National Geographic Channel; Speed Channel Magazines: <i>TV Guide</i>, <i>The Weekly Standard</i>, and others Gemstar International, the world's leading provider of interactive programming guides Newspapers: world's leading publisher of English-language papers with operations in the United Kingdom, Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the United States, totaling more than 175 different newspapers that print more than 40 million copies a week, including the <i>New York Post</i> Book publishing: HarperCollins, William Morrow, Avon books, and others Marketing and public relations companies Recording studios National Rugby League</p>
<p>NBC-Universal (www.nbcuni.com)</p>	<p>NBC and Telemundo television networks, 29 owned and operated television stations, Universal Television studios, cable networks CNBC, MSNBC (owned jointly with Microsoft), USA Network, Sci Fi Channel, Bravo, and Trio, Paxson Communications, including the PAX network (32%), Universal Pictures film studios, Universal theme parks. NBC is part of the General Electric (GE) conglomerate, which manufactures a complete line of home appliances, consumer electronics, and a variety of high technology products, including electrical utility equipment, healthcare equipment, and aircraft engines. GE also provides financial services to businesses and consumers (including credit services to customers, retailers and auto dealers in over 35 countries)</p>

Sources: Company Web sites as listed.

tended to be extremely entrepreneurial. Steve Jobs started Apple Computer out of his garage, and two graduate students, Jerry Yang and Dave Filo, created Yahoo in a tiny trailer office at Stanford University. Many students get their start in media industries through entrepreneurial activities (see the Close-Up on Industry box).

self quiz

What are the primary forms of media ownership, and what are the main characteristics of each?



MEDIA AND GOVERNMENTS AROUND THE WORLD

The ways in which the media serve the public are highly dependent on the type of relationship media organizations have with government. There are several different types of media/government relationships in the world today.

on Industry

Breaking into a Media Career

The CD-ROM that accompanies this book contains a series of “Media Tours” that will take you inside several media companies. For those who are interested in pursuing careers in the media, here are a handful of guidelines and suggestions:

1. *Extracurricular activities.* First, take advantage of on-campus opportunities related to your field of interest. If you are interested in journalism, volunteer to work on your campus paper. Many campuses today also have radio stations and television studios where students can work. Some also have advertising and

Employers look for three things in prospective employees: good communication skills, good computer skills, and a well-rounded general education.

public relations offices that will accept student volunteers or part-time workers. Sometimes a campus work experience will show you what area of a field you are interested in; other times, it might show you that you aren't really interested in that career, and guide you toward your true calling instead.

2. *Coursework.* Choose courses that develop the skills that are in demand. Most employers, in most types of companies, look for three things in prospective employees: good communication skills, good information technology (computer) skills, and a well-rounded general education. Courses in media-related

areas are also important, but not for the reasons you might think. Media employers (with the exception of most newspaper editors) usually do not believe you are going to learn how to perform a specific job in your college classes. The industries change too quickly for that, and employer needs tend to be too specific. Managers know they are going to have to train you to perform the functions they need done. However, coursework in media areas shows that you are interested in their industry, and that you have a general knowledge of what that industry is all about. These courses also enable you to work on special projects that you can list on a résumé and show to a potential employer. If you apply at a movie studio, for example, there is a good chance that an executive there might be interested in the research you did into new movie technologies or movies on the Web.

3. *Internships.* Take advantage of internship opportunities. Many colleges now offer the opportunity for students to work in a local industry and earn academic credit for doing so. Generally, the internship has to be set up both with the local company and with the college department. You should begin planning for your internship several months before you plan to take it. Find out what the policies are at your college and which local media companies are available. You can inquire at the employment or human relations department of the company to find out about their policies on internships.

Government Ownership

At one extreme, a system calls for the government to own and operate the media. Communist countries such as China, North Korea, and Cuba tend to follow this model, as did Afghanistan under the Taliban. The idea behind government control over mass communication is that media exist to serve the government. Truth and public service are both determined by what government officials decide is good for society.

Private Ownership, Government Control

A slightly less extreme system of media control allows the media to be privately owned but still requires media organizations to be controlled by the government. This is the media/government relationship preferred in dictatorships such as that in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Just as in the system of

4. *Off-campus work.* Consider a part-time or temporary job at a local media company, such as the town newspaper or an Internet start-up. This type of job often does not involve college credit or the supervision of an academic adviser, but it does have the advantage of generating income and helping you gain valuable experience. Also, if there are no internships or jobs available, or if you are the type of person who likes to work for yourself rather than an employer, consider the entrepreneurial route. There are many media fields that lend themselves to self-starters. You could help save a failing barber shop, for example, by organizing an advertising and public relations campaign that includes raffles for free haircuts and circulars delivered to neighborhood homes. Working on a percentage of new business generated, you could earn a fair commission as well as invaluable experience to tell a future employer about.

5. *Networking.* In this sense the word *network* means to develop contacts with and open up lines of communication with industry professionals. They are usually busy people, but they often don't mind offering advice to college students. You might meet industry professionals when they come to your school as guest speakers, or you might arrange to interview media practitioners, if only over the telephone or by e-mail, for college projects and papers. Also, make a habit of reading the professional publications in your field of interest. Organizations such as the National Association of Broadcasters and the Newspaper Publishers Association of America have student

branches; ask your professor about these, or find them through the Internet. Participating in conferences of student media organizations is also good for networking. If you happen to find a media professional you particularly admire and get along with, you might want to ask him or her to mentor you. A mentor is a professional you can seek out for advice on a regular basis.

6. *Outside reading.* Browse in your local library or bookstore for books about the media areas you are interested in. Useful books include Peterson's "Breaking into . . ." series, such as *Breaking into Television*, and books written by industry veterans, such as Dan Rather's *The Camera Never Sleeps*.

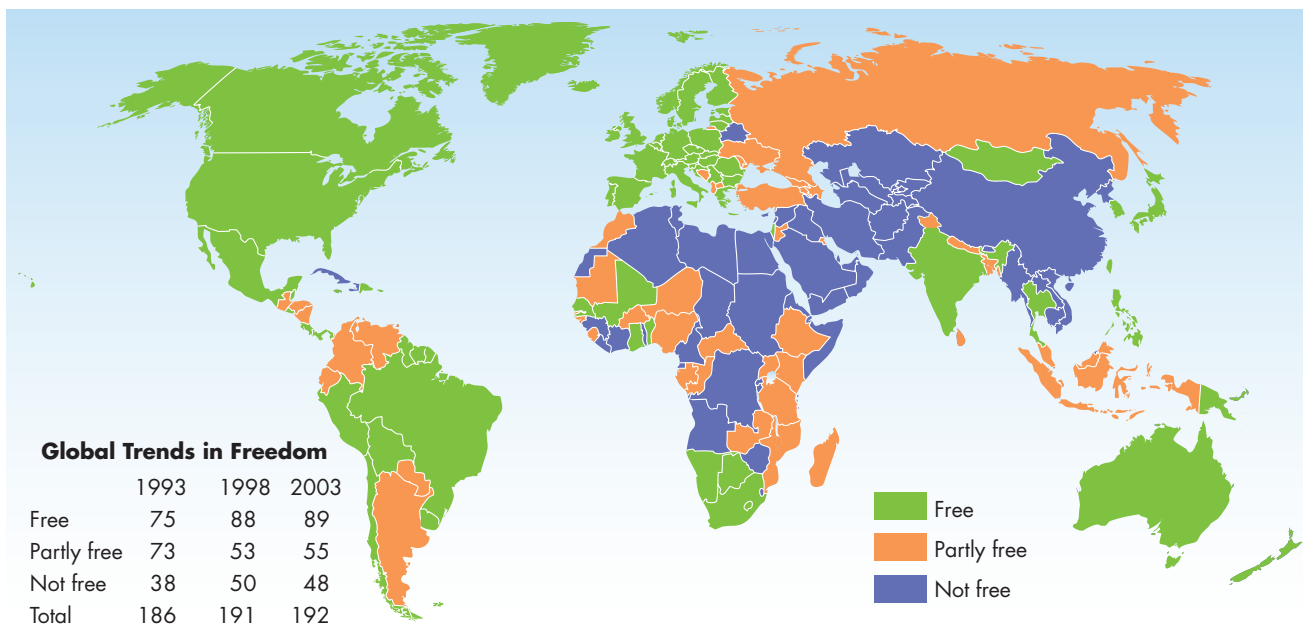


On the *Media World* CD that accompanies this book, (Track 3.1, "Radio: Getting a Job"), Kevin McNeil, DJ and Production Director at WKNE-FM in Keene, NH, discusses the value of college media courses.

government ownership, the government determines what information, entertainment, and persuasion will be presented through the media. Generally in such a system, voices that might challenge government authority are censored. The majority of countries today have either a government-owned or a government-controlled media system.¹⁰

Libertarian

At the other extreme, a third type of system, the libertarian system, calls for media to be privately owned and to be free of government control. A purely libertarian system, however, exists only in theory. The United States probably comes closest to this ideal, but because of the nature of broadcast media and the power of media in general, no country allows its media to be entirely unregulated. In fact, most countries have a mixed model.



Freedom House does an annual survey of political rights and civil liberties in the world. Press freedom is a major component of their analysis.

Mixed Model

Most countries today have varying degrees of government control and ownership of media. In China, for example, most media are government owned and operated, but private ownership of some media is now being allowed. The United States also has a mixed model. Although most U.S. media are privately owned, the government owns and operates several media outlets, such as the U.S. Government Printing Office, the Armed Forces Radio and Television Network, Radio Free Europe, and Radio Free China. The U.S. government also regulates the privately owned broadcast media, although it does so in a much less repressive way than a government such as China's.



self quiz

Why is the media's relationship with government important, and what forms does that relationship take?

The U.S. Model

The American media and the American government are interrelated in three important ways: (1) Media businesses are subject to government regulation, (2) the media act as a potential "watchdog" or "fourth estate" of government, and (3) the media are the principal channels through which political campaigns take place.

Regulation

Government regulation of the media has always been minimal in the United States because of fears of censorship. **Censorship** is a broad term that includes any action that prohibits an act of expression from being made public (see the Close-Up on Controversy box, pp. 28–29). In spite of the fact that the free circulation of both political and artistic ideas is important in a democracy, the idea of "dangerous speech" has real meaning when that speech is delivered via mass media. For example, Geraldo Rivera, serving as a war correspondent for Fox News during the early days of the 2003 Iraq war, drew a diagram in the sand to show where his unit was and how they

censorship

Any action that prohibits an act of expression from being made public.

would engage the enemy forces. The U.S. military felt this endangered the lives of soldiers in the field, since enemy intelligence had access to Rivera's report. The correspondent was asked to leave the country (although later he was allowed to return).

Adversarial Relationship

While the U.S. government does have some regulatory control over the media, the media act as an unofficial watchdog of government actions. The founders of the United States—people like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin—envisioned the American media as a **fourth estate**, or unofficial fourth branch of government, designed to observe and report on the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The media were supposed to keep citizens informed about the actions and decisions of their elected representatives. In doing so, the media were expected to have an **adversarial relationship** with government, one in which the press followed different objectives from those in power. An adversarial press is not supposed to act as a cheerleader or perform public relations for governmental administrations. Alexander Hamilton, one of the architects of the Constitution, pointed out that it is the duty of the press to examine each new law proposed by government. If the law is found wanting, Hamilton said, “it is essential to say, not only that the measure is bad and deleterious, but to hold up the person who is the author, that, in this our free and elective government, he may be removed from the seat of power.”¹¹

Some critics contend that today's press goes too far in its watchdog role, especially during times of war. President George W. Bush, for example, complained in 2003 and 2004 that the press was concentrating too much on the violence that followed the declared end to major conflict in Iraq. Others, however, say the press does not go far enough in its watchdog role. Many critics, in fact, felt that the press was too lenient in examining the Bush administration's motivations for invading Iraq in the first place.¹² Other critics point out that journalists knew about the abuse of Iraqi prisoners by Americans long before it became a major scandal in 2004, but failed to report it.¹³

Elections

Modern mass media, especially television, have reshaped American politics by allowing candidates to go directly to the people rather than working their way up through the ranks of the two major political parties. Some observers believe that much of this change is for the better: Candidates are no longer chosen solely by party leaders meeting in private, and political deals unknown to the public are less likely to be the basis of their candidacy. More Americans than ever before are exposed to what the candidates have to say. Critics, however, claim that media coverage has reduced political campaigns to sportlike contests, in which short, sensational sound bites distract voters from the substance of issues, while 30-second negative commercials cause voters to distrust all candidates.

One of the problems with “horse race” campaign coverage is that news organizations often rush to be the first to declare the winner, which leads to situations such as that of the 2000 presidential election, when both George W. Bush and Al Gore were declared winners on election night, only to have the election results placed in limbo for more than a month. Other critics say that media coverage gives inexperienced celebrities too great an advantage in elections, as when Jesse Ventura, a former professional wrestler, was elected

fourth estate

The press as an unofficial fourth branch of government.

adversarial relationship

A relationship in which two parties contend with or oppose each other. In the United States, the media are expected to have an adversarial relationship with the government so that they can serve a watchdog role.

governor of Minnesota, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, an actor, was elected governor of California. At the very least, most critics agree that under the current system only those rich enough (or skilled enough at fund-raising) to finance a highly publicized campaign, complete with tens of millions of dollars for television advertising, can win public office.

MEDIA AND THE AUDIENCE

An important yet often forgotten part of any media system is the audience. The audience determines the final meaning for any media message. It also determines whether a particular media product, or even the medium itself, will survive.

The Audience Is the Final Arbiter of Meaning

The producers of mediated messages—the writers, editors, directors and so on—might have a particular message in mind, but it is the audience who decides what the final meaning is. There have been many films, for example, that the directors intended to be deadly serious, but the audience found to be unintentionally funny. This was true of some of the campy science fiction movies of the 1950s.

The audience's perception of what a message means is notoriously unpredictable and varied. For example, the character Archie Bunker in the 1970s sitcom *All in the Family* was famous for spouting ethnic and racial slurs. The producers of that program intended for the audience to consider Archie's bigotry worthy of revulsion. A part of the audience, however, saw Archie as a man who spoke the truth, someone who said aloud what other people only thought. Thus a character meant to expose and ridicule bigotry became a reinforcer for members of the audience who were already prejudiced.



Audiences have found some films to be unintentionally funny, even when the producers intended them to be frightening.

The Audience Has Economic Clout

The tendency of the audience to determine the meaning of media content is important because of the audience's economic clout. All media products, from book titles to Web sites, survive by audience preference. The print media's advertising rates are determined by circulation figures; television programs live and die by Nielsen ratings. Advertisers depend on the most basic audience vote of all: buying behavior. In fact, many critics consider audience influence too great today. These critics say that the media are continually giving audiences what they want, rather than what they need, what is good for them, or what is of an inherently high quality.

Audience Acceptance Establishes New Technology

The audience also plays a major role in the acceptance or rejection of new media technology. Even in their primitive stages, many new technologies

evoked enough wonder in enough people to create a demand for advanced forms. Often the first reactions were pure curiosity: Voices from the air! Moving pictures from a piece of living-room furniture! When stereophonic sound came out in the 1950s, the most popular records were simple sound effects, like crowd noises or thunder, moving from one stereo speaker to another. People were happy to watch test patterns on early TV, just as early scribes stood in awe of the first pages to come off the printing press.

There has been, however, considerable resistance to and fear of each new medium as well. Books were threatening to the religious leaders of the 15th century because they would allow the spread of literacy and thus undermine the church's unique authority. Radio's rock-and-roll music in the 1950s was considered a dangerous influence on youth, and that fear continues in reference to some of today's rap music. In the 1930s perceptions of the movies' violence and immorality fueled calls to ban certain films. Similar fears were heightened at various points in later decades when the same type of entertainment entered the home through television, video games, and the Internet.

Organized Audience Members Can Make a Difference

Audience members concerned about media content have wielded a considerable amount of power when they have banded together as consumer groups. Activist groups that have had a notable impact include the National Consumers Union, various religious and environmental groups, and racial and ethnic organizations. One group, Action for Children's Television, led by Peggy Charren, influenced the passage of the Children's Television Act of 1990, which required television broadcasters to schedule three hours a week of educational children's programming.

Activist groups have shown that audience members can have an impact. In fact, even one consumer can make a difference. Terry Rakolta, a midwestern housewife who became upset about the quality of television programming, led a boycott movement that prompted two advertisers to pull their ads from the sitcom *Married with Children*. All of these examples illustrate the potential influence of the media audience. They also lead to a consideration of the types of controversies that affect mass media today.

consider this

Media literacy is defined as the ability to understand and make productive use of the media in your life.

Do you accept this definition? If so, how media literate do you consider yourself to be?

self quiz

In what ways do audiences influence media industries?

Media Controversies

There are many ways to look at the controversies that media create in today's society. Some controversies exist only in a particular medium. The transmission of computer viruses, for example, is a controversial issue that relates solely to users of computer networks such as the Internet. In fact, we will look at media controversies in the next eight chapters of this book on a medium-by-medium basis. Alternatively, many of these controversies can be organized into three separate types: impact issues, legal issues, and ethical issues.

on Controversy

The Many Meanings of Censorship

We will look at the idea of censorship repeatedly in this book. In fact, it will become something of a recurrent theme, from the censorship of classic books such as James Joyce's *Ulysses*, to the censorship of films, radio shows, and Web sites.

Criticism is not censorship. Censorship is prior restraint or prosecution of communications activity by the government.

One of the things that make censorship such a big issue is the fact that it is defined differently by different people and therefore includes a wide range of behaviors. For a legal purist, censorship involves **prior restraint**, that is, forbidding or restricting a form of expression before it is made. Certainly the severest form of censorship, prior restraint by the government is also extremely rare in the United States. It has been attempted only a few times, and the courts have generally found it to be unconstitutional.

For some, governmental prosecution of communications activity after the fact is also a form of censorship. Thus, when some municipalities prosecuted theaters that exhibited Martin Scorsese's 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ* because they found it sacrilegious, there was a wide uproar. A judge overturned those prosecutions.¹ In Oklahoma, video store operators were prosecuted for renting out the German film *The Tin Drum* (1979) because of a two-minute scene in the film that suggested sexual conduct involving minors. This legal action also touched off an uproar and was overturned.

For others, censorship includes any restriction of communications activity, whether or not on the part of government. For these critics, infringements on the right of free speech are too serious to be ignored no matter who commits them. This is why, for example, fans of radio celebrity Howard Stern complained of censorship when Stern's show was taken off six radio stations owned by Clear Channel Communications in 2004. From a legal scholar's point of view, however, this was not censorship but merely a business decision that Clear Channel had every right to make, in light of



Violence, like that shown in this scene from the HBO series *The Sopranos*, tends to be an impact issue. Many researchers have tried to determine whether or not there is a link between violence in the media and violent behavior.

IMPACT ISSUES DEAL WITH MEDIA'S INFLUENCE

Impact issues deal with media effects: how the media affect society, and how they affect individuals within society. When discussing impact issues throughout this book, our conclusions will be informed by various findings from the world of media research, designed to explain how various media distort reality and what effect these distortions have on society. You should also gain an enhanced understanding of the complexity of media impact, and why overly general blanket criticisms don't make sense. The statement "Media violence causes increased violence in society," for example, is far too simplistic to apply in all matters of public policy. To truly understand media impact, you will need to know the findings from a variety of different types of research. We will address those in Chapter 13.

LEGAL ISSUES DEAL WITH MEDIA LAW AND REGULATION

Legal issues deal with media practices—such as those in the areas of libel, invasion of privacy, and antitrust actions—that are governed by law. When discussing media law, we will look at the way basic tenets of the U.S. Constitution, especially those inherent

the fact that Stern's programming put the company at risk for heavy fines from the Federal Communications Commission.

For some media practitioners, any criticism of the media is considered a form of censorship. This is why the Southern Baptists, for example, have been accused of trying to impose censorship for saying that Walt Disney's films promote immorality. One First Amendment expert has pointed out, "Technically, legally, only an agent of the state can censor. But the term has been loosened to mean that if you criticize somebody's work, and you imply in the course of the criticism that it should be done away with, people by and large would call that censorship."² From a legal point of view, of course, criticism is not censorship. Legally, censorship is prior restraint or prosecution of communications activity by the government.

Inherent in the controversy over censorship laws is the idea that freedom of speech involves a freedom to hear as well as a freedom to express. Thus when the Bush administration edited out information about global warming on an Environmental Protection Agency report



Church members circle a bonfire of "Harry Potter" and other books outside a church in Alamogordo, New Mexico. The church's pastor called the books by author J.K. Rowling a "masterpiece of satanic deception." Some media practitioners consider this type of protest to be a form of censorship.

in 2003, critics called that censorship, because the public no longer had access to that information.

¹"Judge Overturns Ban on Film," *New York Times*, September 11, 1988, p. 34.

²Nat Hentoff, columnist for the *Village Voice* and author of many books on freedom of speech, quoted in William F. Powers, "War of the Words: But Bob Dole & Co. Are onto Something. The New Censorship: A Manifesto," in Thomas Beell, ed., *Messages 4: The Washington Post Media Companion* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1997).

within the **First Amendment**, have resulted in conflict. For example, the right of news media to report on trials and the right of the defendant to a fair trial are constantly at odds. Many conflicts are based on differing definitions of censorship (see the Close-Up on Controversy box). We will deal with media law throughout this book and focus on it specifically in Chapter 14.

ETHICAL ISSUES DEAL WITH THE MORALITY OF MEDIA

Numerous controversies deal with the basic idea of whether certain media practices are right or wrong, from a moral point of view. Truth telling as opposed to deception in media, for example, is usually an ethical issue. Ethics takes on a special importance in media studies because many observers believe that the media are at least partially to blame for the confusing state of today's morals. Conflicting messages confuse people about what's right and what's wrong. Many media products seem to glorify ethical behavior. The blockbuster *Spider-Man* movies, for example, exalted bravery, selflessness, and the nobility of the common person, while television magazine shows such as *60 Minutes* make a practice out of uncovering and bringing down unethical people and practices. But other media products seem to promote the low end of the ethical continuum even more enthusiastically: television sitcoms, even quality ones such as *Frasier*, smirk at white lies and manipulation, and

self quiz

**What are the different definitions of censorship?
What is the legal definition?**



prior restraint

Prevention of publication by government.

First Amendment

The part of the U.S. Constitution's Bill of Rights that guarantees freedom of speech.



Some critics believe that popular television programs such as *The Simpsons* are guilty of ethical faults.

prime-time cartoons such as *The Simpsons* appear to celebrate antisocial behavior by both children and adults. Meanwhile, in the world of popular music, “gangsta rappers” have been accused of bragging about rape, assault, and the murder of police officers, while they insist they are just depicting the reality of inner-city neighborhoods.

When discussing ethics, we will look at what the world’s philosophers have told us about various ethical points of view. We will also look at the various codes of ethics that each media industry espouses, and we will consider how well the industries conform to those codes. We will deal with ethical issues throughout this book and focus specifically on them in Chapter 15.

THE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF IMPACT, LEGAL, AND ETHICAL ISSUES

Impact, legal, and ethical issues are interrelated. Laws are written to protect citizens from harmful media effects; for example, pornography involving child actors is outlawed. Ethically, it is considered wrong to present something to an audience that could have a harmful effect on them. This is essentially the argument used against portrayals of violence that might be viewed by children. You might say that ethical issues take impact and legal issues one step further, to a basic philosophical understanding of what the impact or law means in moral terms.

Because they are interrelated, some controversies can be analyzed from all three perspectives. Analyzing issues from the impact perspective, you might deal with questions like “Does media violence cause violence in society?” or “Does the concentration of ownership of American media lead to less freedom of speech?” From a legal perspective, you might ask, “Should it be legal to produce programs that might cause additional violence in society?” or “Should it be legal for media businesses to become so big that freedom of speech is threatened?” And from an ethical perspective, you might ask, “Is it morally right to produce programs that might cause additional violence in society?” or “Is it morally right for media businesses to become so big that the diversity of voices is lessened?”

self quiz

How do impact issues, legal issues, and ethical issues differ? How are they related?

Summing Up

In this chapter, we looked at the reasons we study media, the current shape of America’s media industries, and the controversies that those industries engender. Mediated communication consists of mass communication, mediated interpersonal communication, and communication through converged media. Mass communication consists of messages that are transmitted through a medium to large, usually widespread audiences.

Media companies tend to concentrate into large corporations and conglomerates for three profit-oriented reasons: economies of scale, synergy, and global competition. The ownership of today’s media fits into several patterns: Group or chain ownership occurs when one company owns the same medium in different market areas; conglomerates form when companies buy up different types of businesses, either in the form of vertical or horizontal integration; monopolies are individual companies that dominate a particular industry; and oligopolies occur when just a few companies dominate an industry. Entrepreneurs are risk-taking individuals who often start new companies to fill a niche left unserved by large corporations.

Governments are always key players in a nation's media. In the United States the media are regulated by government, act conversely as a watchdog over government, and form the channels through which election campaigns are conducted. The final component of a media system is the audience. The audience determines the final meaning of media content. The audience has economic influence, even in terms of the acceptance and rejection of new types of media. The audience also plays a key role in generating media controversies by protesting and forming groups to lobby against media practices.

Controversies tend to be based on three concerns. Impact issues concern how the media affect both individuals and society; common issues in this area involve violence and sex in movies, television, and recordings. Legal issues—such as libel, privacy, and antitrust laws—deal with media practices that have been prohibited or required by legislation. Ethical issues such as truth telling deal with the basic idea of whether media practices are morally right or wrong.

The following terms are defined and indexed in the Glossary of Key Terms at the back of the book.

adversarial relationship 25	First Amendment 29	mediated interpersonal communication 9
antitrust laws 17	fourth estate 25	medium 7
censorship 24	gatekeeper 8	monopoly 19
communication 6	group ownership 16	noise 7
conglomerates 17	horizontal integration 18	objectivity 11
convergence 9	mass communication 8	oligopoly 19
cross-merchandizing 16	media 7	prior restraint 29
cultural imperialism 14	media criticism 5	synergy 15
economies of scale 15	media literacy 5	vertical integration 17
entrepreneur 19	mediated communication 7	
feedback 7		

HISTORY

Web Excursion

1. In your opinion, what are the major technological breakthroughs in American media history? Search for media history sources on the Web or go directly to the Media History Project at www.mediahistory.umn.edu. Access their timeline and image gallery, and choose five scientific breakthroughs that seem to you to be most important.

There is no single “right” answer to this question, but explain why you selected the events you did.

PowerWeb Articles

2. Go to the Student portion of the Online Learning Center and choose Chapter 1. In the left navigation bar under News, Articles & Links, click PowerWeb Articles. On the next screen, under the topic of International News, read the article, “The View From Abroad.” In your opinion, were early reports from U.S. news organizations about the war on terrorism more or less accurate than those from abroad? Explain why you feel the way you do.

In addition, scan the list for other articles of interest pertaining to this chapter.

Key Terms

Electronic Excursions

INDUSTRY

Web Excursion

3. Search for sites devoted to media ownership or go directly to “Who Owns What,” *The Columbia Journalism Review’s* guide to media companies at www.cjr.org/tools/owners/.^{*} Who owns the media that you use most? Find the owners of your favorite newspaper, magazine, radio station, TV station, cable service and Web site. Any surprises? Any possible conflicts of interest? What could be the possible effect of that ownership?

Media World CD-ROM Excursion

4. **Media Talk**—On the CD that accompanies this book, view Media Talk track 7, *Media Professionals Discuss the State of the Media* (from NBC’s *Today Show*). In this clip, Steven Brill, editor of *Brill’s Content*, Larry Sabato, a professor at the University of Virginia and Cynthia Tucker, Editorial Page Editor of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* discuss media standards and ethics. What does Steven Brill mean by his statement, “We’ve gone from meat-and-potatoes journalism to hot-fudge-Sunday journalism”?

PowerWeb Articles

5. Go to the Student portion of the Online Learning Center and choose Chapter 1. In the left navigation bar under News, Articles & Links, click PowerWeb Articles. On the next screen, under the topic of Federal Communications Commission (FCC), read the article, “Media Mergers: The Danger Remains.” Do you believe that media consolidation is a danger to democracy? Back up your ideas with information from this article.

In addition, scan the list for other articles of interest pertaining to this chapter.

CONTROVERSIES

Web Excursion

6. Search the Web for sites devoted to media criticism or go directly to Cursor at www.cursor.org, to Altnet at www.altnet.org, to AIM at www.aim.org, or to FAIR at www.fair.org. Select a current media issue that you find noteworthy, and describe how it could be seen from all three perspectives (as an impact, legal, and ethical issue) discussed in the “Controversies” section of this chapter.

Media World CD-ROM Excursion

7. **Media Talk**—On the CD-ROM that accompanies this book, view Media Talk track 15, *Michael Moore Discusses Columbine and Mass Media*. On a visit to NBC’s *Phil Donahue Show*, filmmaker Michael Moore discusses his views on the American media. One of Moore’s arguments is that increased violence in the media leads to increased violence in our society. What are your thoughts on this argument?

PowerWeb Articles

8. Go to the Student portion of the Online Learning Center and choose Chapter 1. In the left navigation bar under News, Articles & Links, click PowerWeb Articles. On the next screen, under the topic of Government Influence, read the article, “The Information Squeeze.” Answer one of the following questions based on this article: Do you believe there is too little (or too much) government secrecy? Do you believe there is too little (or too much) personal privacy today?
In addition, scan the list for other articles of interest pertaining to this chapter.

ONLINE LEARNING CENTER WWW.MHHE.COM/RODMAN

You may access these and additional Web excursions at the Online Learning Center for the book (www.mhhe.com/rodman). Visit the student portion of this Web site to also access the *Interactive Timeline of Mass Media Milestones*, chapter highlights, self-quizzes, and recommended readings, movies, and documentaries for this chapter.

*Some Web site addresses may change. When they do, please search for the Web site by name or topic on your favorite search engine.