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Melvin L. DeFleur

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HOW MASSIVE ARE THE MASS MEDIA?

Implications for Communications Education and Research

MELVIN L. DEFLEUR

WHAT ARE the quantitative dimensions of the mass media in the United States, and how have these changed over time? How have these changes altered relationships between the individual media as they have competed for audience attention? What have been the concerns of the public as these events have taken place? Furthermore, what have been the implications of those changes for the development of higher education in journalism and media-related studies, along with its associated tradition of research on the processes and effects of mass communications? The present paper is organized around these topics.

These are obviously complex questions, and there are no simple answers, especially since the media have been and are in a constant state of change. Therefore, it is not the sheer size of a medium at a particular point in time that is important in assessing its influences in the society but its overall patterns of growth and decline. Even more significant are the patterns of relationships *between* media that develop as improving technologies make existing media more popular, bring new media into use, or make one or the other less competitive in contending for the attention of the audience.

Generally, then, this article presents a quantitative overview of the media in the United States. I intend to show not only that the media are large but that they constitute a dynamic, complex, powerful, interdependent, and technologically sophisticated social system. That system has significant influences on the public and also is critical to the nation in that many of the basic institutions of our society are dependent upon it. This review demonstrates that it is in the best interests of the United States to have its colleges and universities providing leadership in structuring the education of the people who will operate and manage that vital social system, as well as providing sponsorship for those who conduct research on their processes and influences.

IMPLICATIONS OF CHANGE IN COMMUNICATION CAPACITY AND TECHNOLOGY

The evolution of human communication capacity and technology spans only a brief period of the time that hominids have existed on our planet (some four million years).[1] Our earliest ancestors could not speak, due to

1. Paleoanthropologists are not in consensus as to which of the numerous early forms of the Hominidae represents the ancestral form of *Homo sapiens.* The most probable choice appears to be *Ramapithecus,* which first appeared some 15 million years ago. Perhaps a more realistic choice is *Australopithecus,* which appears in the fossil record from about 3.77 to .9 million years back. *Homo sapiens* began to arrive between 500,000 and 100,000 years ago. Our modern form, referred to as Cro-Magnon, goes back no more than 90,000 to 50,000 years (Philip L. Stein and Bruce M. Rowe, *Physical Anthropology,* 3d ed. [New York: McGraw Hill, 1978], esp. pp. 326–428).

the structure of their vocal tracts and voice boxes.[2] Speech and language came with the Cro-Magnon, probably not further back than forty to fifty thousand years. Ideographic writing began a mere six thousand years ago. Some three millennia later (around 1700 B.C.) the transition to phonetic systems began. By 500 B.C., the Ionian Greeks had standardized an alphabet, which the Romans inherited, improved, and passed on for us to use today.[3] A few hundred years later, just thirty-six years before Columbus sailed, Gutenberg printed his famous Bible, and the foundation was in place for a transition to an age of mass communications.[4]

It would not be until the early 1800s, when the new technology of steam made it possible to drive a high-speed press, that a true "mass" medium would become practical. It was a product not only of the advancing technology of the industrial revolution but of earlier changes in political institutions and the accelerating growth of the capitalistic economy.[5] It came in the form of a newspaper designed to appeal to a popular audience. It spread rapidly, and by the last half of the century, newspapers were being widely read. Magazines and a growing book industry added to the widespread availability of print.

For centuries, scientists have developed the principles that form the base of modern technologies of the media—telegraph, recordings, telephone, movies, radio, and television. Clever inventors applied those principles during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which brought an unprecedented surge in our capacity to create, store, recover, transmit, receive, interpret, and be influenced by ever-expanding categories of information. Thus, in the age of mass communications, time and distance have been conquered and our society is awash in a sea of information. In a sense we are like our primitive ancestors at the time when they had barely acquired speech and language. Like them, we have not yet grasped the full significance of our new capacities to communicate.

The remarkable thing about all of these prehistorical and historical transitions in human communication is the exponential curve they followed in time. It took millions of years for speech to develop; tens of thousands for writing; a few thousand for printing; and only a few hundred for a mass press, after which the pace quickened. Many of our oldest Americans can remember life with neither movies nor any of the broadcast media. People now in middle age experienced a society with no television. Even our young adults still in school were born into a society in which telecommunications technology was based on copper wire rather than on microwaves, satellite transmissions, and fiber optics. Today, the pace is soaring.

The implications of these sweeping changes in communication capacity and technology are profound. Each has made possible astonishing advances in human thought, culture, and societal organization. The initial flowering of human culture during the Neolithic period could not have occurred without speech and language. The combination of writing and portable media made possible Rome's successful administration of the first truly world-class empire.[6] Later, when print arrived, it made possible an enormous expansion of ideas that deeply influenced human thought and social existence. With all of its limitations, the early mass press, combined with growing literacy, enabled ordinary citizens to participate more effectively in the new democracies.

2. Philip Lieberman, "The Evolution of Human Speech: The Fossil Record," in *The Biology and Evolution of Language* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 287–329. The inferences set forth in this section concerning the origins of human speech have been drawn from this source.

3. Joseph Naveh, *Early History of the Alphabet* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1982).

4. For a more detailed summary of these changes and some of their implications: Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, "A Theory of Transitions," in *Theories of Mass Communication* (White Plains, N.Y.: Longman, 1989), 7–26.

5. See Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* trans. T. Parsons (1920; London: George Allen and Unwin, 1930).

6. Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications* (1950; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 107.

There can be no doubt that today's advances in the scope and capacity of human communication will make equally significant changes. In our own time, our ability to transmit, store, and recover information has been greatly expanded. This can increase our ability to accumulate all aspects of culture at an even faster pace and to conduct an increasingly complex social life. Advancing communication technology, then, is now having and will continue to have inevitable influences on all of us individually and on each of our social institutions. These observations are the ultimate justification not only for tolerating but for promoting and fostering university curricula that prepare tomorrow's media managers and for encouraging scholarly efforts to understand the processes and effects of mass communications in all of their aspects.

OUR CHANGING MEDIA

A brief look at the patterns of technological change and quantitative growth of each of our major media provides more detailed lessons about the pace of development and insights into the consequences of new communication systems. There is every reason to believe that the pace will continue to accelerate rather than slow down. This raises profound questions about the influence of such change on each of us, on the organization and functioning of our society, on the further evolution of our culture, and especially on how we should train people to cope with the system of mass communications that lies ahead.

The Mass Newspaper One and one-half centuries are barely a tick of time in the long history of human communication. It has been during that time, however, that the greatest changes have occurred. It seems reasonable to say that it was not until early in the nineteenth century that the age of mass communications actually began. It was a modest enough beginning, but at the time several critical features of our contemporary American mass communication system were established. Benjamin Day's *New York Sun* is usually identified as the first newspaper specifically produced for an audience of ordinary people.[7] It was a curious little paper, with news of local events and with a considerable emphasis on crime, violence, and sensational accounts. It all but ignored the more serious reader—the educated elite—who wanted news about commercial matters and the political situation.

Day's initial circulation was about eight thousand per day—huge for the time. He used a press that could turn out fifteen hundred copies an hour. Within three years, his new steam-driven Hoe press could churn out four thousand copies an hour! Circulation soared. Others wanting to start newspapers saw his success, and almost overnight several rival papers were in fierce competition for readers. The age of mass communications had undoubtedly dawned.

These events shaped the first mass medium in ways that were to characterize U.S. communications industries ever since. For example, Day had solved one of the most crucial problems that any mass medium faces—how to support it financially. He was able to sell his paper to the public at a loss (for only a penny); he recovered his costs and made a significant profit by

7. For a thorough history of the newspaper: Edwin Emery and Michael Emery, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.Y.: Prentice-Hall, 1978). An account of the *New York Sun* is provided on pp. 120–22.

selling space to advertisers. The large circulation of the paper appealed to businesses that wanted their advertising message presented to as many potential purchasers as possible. A critical relationship between mass communications and advertising was established, and it remains as the financial foundation of most media industries in the United States today.

At the same time, the competitive struggle with other emerging papers for large numbers of readers (to satisfy advertisers) had a strong influence on the content of Day's and others' papers. Overwhelmingly, they concentrated on any kind of news report that would capture and hold the attention of their readers. They had to have entertainment appeal to make them popular. Consequently, the intellectual level of the content, or its significance in the long run, became secondary. The "law of large numbers" (economic survival is a function of audience size) prevailed, and it has held sway ever since.[8]

8. Melvin L. DeFleur and Everette E. Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication*, 3d ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 91–92.

By the time of the Civil War, newspapers had spread to every community in the United States and were easily available to literate people. The new telegraph made possible "wire services" that brought information to publishers, even in remote areas, about events in other communities, the nation, and the world. The steamboat and the railroad made it possible to deliver newspapers in a timely manner far beyond the communities in which they were published. As the century moved on, Americans increasingly became a society of newspaper readers. From just before World War I and well into the 1960s, U.S. households had on average at least one subscription to a daily newspaper (Table 1).

The golden age of the newspaper was between about 1910 and the onset of the Great Depression. There were no competing media from which citizens could keep up with the news. Great chains of papers were being established, a trend that would become even more pronounced in later years.[9] Wire services and foreign correspondents supplied daily papers with an abundance of reports. Syndicates brought dozens of features, ranging from the crossword puzzle to advice for the lovelorn. In short, as the 1920s began, the U.S. newspaper was a politically powerful, economically successful, and deeply entrenched medium with no serious competitors. Certainly, in 1920, no one could have predicted that, due to the arrival of a new technology, newspaper subscriptions per household would slip dramatically within a few decades to about one-half of what they were at their peak.

9. For a review of such trends: John C. Busterna, "Trends in Daily Newspaper Ownership," *Journalism Quarterly* 65, no. 4 (1988): 831–38.

Although newspapers today remain as one of our principal media, numerous adjustments have had to be made as competitors—radio, television, and weekly news magazines—offered the public alternative sources of information. The numbers of dailies published in the United States have reflected these modifications. For example, between 1880 and 1890, the number of newspapers in the United States more than doubled (from 850 to just under 2,000). By 1910, there were 2,202 English-language dailies and approximately 400 that were being published in other languages. In 1920, however, a decline began. The number went from 2,042 to approximately 1,750 in 1945. It remained relatively constant at that level until 1960, when the number began to slip again. By 1985, only 1,676 dailies were being published in the United States.[10]

10. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 108th ed. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 528.

Newspapers have survived in large part because the computer age has

TABLE 1

Newspapers in the United States: Subscriptions per Household, 1850–1986

Year	*Subscriptions to Daily Newspapers (in thousands)*[a]	*Total Number of Households (in thousands)*	*Subscriptions per Household*
1850	758	3,598	.21
1860	1,478	5,211	.28
1870	2,602	7,579	.34
1880	3,566	9,946	.36
1890	8,387	12,690	.66
1900	15,102	15,992	.94
1910	24,212	17,806	1.36
1920	27,791	20,697	1.34
1930	39,589	29,905	1.32
1940	41,132	34,855	1.18
1950	53,829	43,468	1.24
1960	58,882	52,610	1.12
1970	62,108	62,875	.99
1980	62,201	80,776	.77
1986	62,489	88,458	.70

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1960), Series R 176, p. 500; Series R 169, p. 500; Series 225, p. 16; Series A 242–44. *Continuation to 1962 and Revisions* (1965), Series R 170, p. 69. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1973), Series P 20, no. 166, 4 August 1967, p. 4.

1986 figures are from the American Newspaper Publishers Association, Washington, DC.

Note: All figures after 1960 include Alaska and Hawaii.

[a]Excluding all Sunday subscriptions.

brought cost-cutting efficiencies to publishing. The result has been that even though the number of daily papers in the United States has gone down those that remain are highly profitable. Consolidation of ownership has eliminated a number of competing locals and brought additional efficiencies in production. For example, in 1987, the Gannett Company owned 93 daily newspapers; Knight-Ridder, Inc. had 34; Newhouse Newspapers had 27. Overall, some fifteen chains owned approximately 250 newspapers.[11] The trend toward consolidation of ownership will undoubtedly continue.

Books and Magazines Throughout the century and one-half of development of the mass media, critics have predicted that Americans would stop reading books. At first, the new popular newspapers were seen as taking their place.[12] In more recent decades, there have been serious trends that have made such a gloomy prediction seem realistic: reading ability declined for decades; the cost of books soared. Moreover, numerous alternative sources for obtaining information and for seeking entertainment became available—the movies, radio, and especially television. At one time

11. These figures were derived from a number of reports in the *Journal of the American Publishers Association* (January 1987).

12. James Gordon Bennett, soon after launching the *New York Herald* in 1835, predicted confidently that "books have had their day." It would be the newspaper, he maintained, that would take the leadership in the development of human civilization (Eric Barnouw, *Mass Communication: Television, Radio, Film, Press* [New York: Rinehart and Company, 1956], 7).

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TABLE 2

Books Published in the United States, 1900–1985

Year	*Number of Books* (*in thousands*)	*Books per Household*
1900	6,356	.40
1905	8,112	.45
1910	13,470	.67
1915	9,734	.43
1920	8,422	.34
1925	9,574	.35
1930	10,027	.33
1935	8,766	.27
1940	11,328	.32
1945	6,548	.18
1950	11,022	.25
1955	11,901	.25
1960	15,012	.29
1965	28,595	.50
1970	36,071	.58
1975	39,372	.55
1980	42,377	.48
1985	50,070	.58

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986), 403.

or another all were seen as the medium that would replace books. Yet in spite of all such factors, books have solidly survived as our most serious medium.

More books are now published (and presumably read) in the United States than was the case at the turn of the century (Table 2). The number of books published per household noticeably declined during the 1920s and 1930s. The new motion pictures, the emergence of radio, and the Great Depression may have been important factors. However, book production sank even lower during the 1950s and 1960s.[13] It was a time when television was rapidly diffusing through the society. In recent decades, however, the popularity of books has gone up sharply, bringing the number per household to a point well above that of 1900. This seeming renaissance was due in large measure to the flooding of the market with ubiquitous, small, inexpensive, and readily available paperbacks. But within those parameters, Americans are producing and presumably reading more books than at any time since World War II.

Magazines were reading fare for Americans in the nineteenth century, even before the Civil War. By mid-century, they were increasing in popularity

13. The all-time low point was reached during the war years of the 1940s, but this was due largely to restrictions on available supplies of paper.

and contained short stories, novels (in installments), reports on scientific achievements, poems, and various kinds of scholarly works. Such titles as the *North American Review* (founded in 1815), *Harper's Monthly* (1850), and *Atlantic Monthly* (1857) were typical of the period. Toward the end of the century, the number of titles increased greatly, and magazines were rising in circulation. After the turn of the century, a number of general magazines came into existence that many older Americans will remember reading: *Collier's, Saturday Evening Post,* and *Liberty*. This type of magazine was aimed at a cross section of the population. Their circulations ran into the millions, and they were very successful as mass media.

Beginning about 1950, many general circulation magazines found themselves in difficulty. Advertisers were turning to the new television medium to reach huge audiences for general-use products. Revenues began to slip; then they declined sharply. Subscription rates had to go up to cover costs; readers turned away by the millions. In spite of these trends, however, a number of large magazines have survived. By 1986, their circulations were impressive: *Reader's Digest,* a unique kind of publication, had a circulation of over 17 million; *TV Guide,* with a symbiotic relationship to another medium, had just over 16 million. *Modern Maturity,* a publication of the American Association of Retired Persons, had more than 13 million. Even the venerable *National Geographic* had a circulation of over 10 million. Yet, many of the earlier general magazines, dozens of which once had equally impressive audiences, are now only memories.[14]

14. DeFleur and Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication,* 169.

As advertisers of general-use products turned to television, a new kind of periodical began to appear in increasing numbers (actually, it had been around all along). It was the highly focused magazine, devoted to a particular topic, like skiing, organic gardening, or model trains. For people devoted to an interest or hobby, the special-interest magazine has great appeal. Although many have modest circulations, limited to enthusiasts of a particular subject or topic, they are an ideal advertising vehicle for related services and equipment. Where better, for example, to advertise fancy champagnes than in the *Wine Spectator*? Or, how could one better reach sailing enthusiasts with a message about boats for charter than in *Yachting*? As a result, the magazine industry made a major shift in its accommodation to the sharp growth of television. Today, more magazine titles are sold than ever before. There are magazines for even the most obscure hobbies and interests. Many are successful, and magazines in that form are definitely here to stay.

Radio Even though radio had important military and maritime applications, it seemed an innocent and even trivial medium in its early days. In fact, for the general population it was little more than a novelty—a kind of sophisticated toy. In 1920, however, radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh began regular broadcasts. By mid-decade two out of every ten households in the United States owned a radio set (Table 3). Between 1925 and 1935, ownership of home receivers soared. Radio as a medium of entertainment, supported by advertising and offering network programming and regular news broadcasts, had become a giant.

Once again, the emergence of a new technology had changed the nation's communication process. It was through the mysterious waves in the

sky that most Americans first heard the voice of their president. As the Great Depression gripped a frightened nation, Franklin Delano Roosevelt told them over the air that they had "nothing to fear but fear itself." They believed him. On Sunday, 7 December 1941, it was radio that was the first source of news about "a date that will live in infamy": the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. The populace was immediately outraged. The new medium played a key role in rapidly provoking powerful and uniform sentiments that would be critical to the war effort.

By the end of the 1930s, radio was a technologically sophisticated medium deeply established as part of the nation's character. It could span the globe with "on-the-spot" transmissions. It was carefully regulated in terms of the technical aspects of broadcasting. The air waves were filled with popular songs, comedians, soap operas, sports broadcasts, election speeches, and above all, commercial messages.[15] Because radio was supported by advertising, its intellectual content, with a few notable exceptions, was scarcely demanding. The formula for financial support that Benjamin Day had hit upon for the mass newspaper worked for mass radio, and the law of large numbers prevailed. No one dreamed, at the close of World War II, that it was about to go into a sudden decline and be eclipsed by a new form of broadcasting.

15. Sydney W. Head and Christopher H. Sterling, ***Broadcasting in America*** (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 57–62.

But as television took over its performers and its content—soap operas, sports broadcasts, situation comedies, and everything else—radio managed to survive. It became the medium of choice when watching television was inappropriate. Music replaced drama, and radio carved out a niche as the medium of talk and of rock, country western, and even classical music. Furthermore, a major transformation in radio technology took place. Broadcasting via FM soared in popularity, leaving the original AM technology something of an orphan child. Radio also remains as an important first source for news bulletins. When major events break, such as the space shuttle disaster, large proportions of the population get their first information from their radios.[16]

16. Melvin L. DeFleur, "The Growth and Decline of Research on the Diffusion of the News: 1945–1985," *Communication Research* 14, no. 1 (1987): 109–30.

The sets have been miniaturized, and their cost lowered. One can now buy for an hour's factory wages a radio fitting into one's palm that has far better and clearer reception than one the size of a bread box and costing a week's wages just after World War II. These facts help in understanding patterns of radio set ownership (Table 3). While Americans now own an average of more than five radios per household, the medium clearly commands their attention in ways very different from its earlier competitive position. Radio appears to be here to stay; it fits our life-style on certain occasions, and it remains an appropriate vehicle for delivering many kinds of local advertising messages.

Film With roots in art and science, motion pictures became technologically possible toward the end of the nineteenth century. The process of transforming them to a popular medium of entertainment began with the new century.[17] Here, financial support took another turn. From the beginning it was the theater—or perhaps more realistically, the circus sideshow—that was the earliest financial model for making a profit from film.

17. Martin Quigley, Jr., *Magic Shadows: The Story of the Origin of Motion Pictures* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1948).

After the novelty of simply seeing images move on the screen wore off, production of feature films began. During the first decade of the new

TABLE 3

Radio in the United States: Home Receiver Ownership, 1922–85

Year	*Sets per Household*	*Year*	*Sets per Household*
1922	.02	1955	2.5
1925	.2	1960	3.7
1930	.4	1965	4.1
1935	1.0	1970	5.1
1940	1.5	1975	5.6
1945[a]	1.5	1980	5.5
1950	2.1	1985	5.5

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 106th ed. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986).

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1960), Series A 242–44, p. 15.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports: Population Characteristics* (Washington, DC: GPO), Series P 20, no. 106, 9 January 1961, p. 11; no. 119, 19 September 1962, p. 4; no. 166, 4 August 1967, p. 4.

National Association of Broadcasters, *Dimensions of Radio* (Washington, DC, 1974).

Electronic Industries Association, *Electronic Market Data Book* (Washington, DC, 1979).

Note: All figures after 1960 include Alaska and Hawaii.

[a]No increase due to freeze on manufacturing during World War II.

century, they were crude and short. But by World War I, they had blossomed into a full-fledged form of mass entertainment. Slapstick comedy soon gave way to feature films, and attendance rose sharply. At the war's end, more than one ticket per household was being sold per week at the box office in the United States. As the 1920s began, the star system had been developed; many classics were being adapted for the screen; and elaborate movie palaces were being constructed. Sound came at the end of the decade, and the motion picture rose sharply in popularity.

By 1930, going to the movies was a deeply established pastime among American families (Table 4). Attendance remained high, and the motion picture entered its golden age. The movies would continue in a position of enormous popularity until the late 1940s, when a totally new medium, combining features of both radio and motion pictures, would begin to emerge as the most dominant of all forms of mass communication. Attendance began a significant decline: weekly admissions to motion picture theaters dropped from an all-time high of three per household (in 1930) to our current low of about two for every ten households in the nation.

The motion picture industry fought back with technology. A variety of

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TABLE 4

Motion Pictures in the United States: Average Number of Tickets Sold per Week, 1922–85

Year	*Tickets Sold per Week (in thousands)*	*Weekly Tickets Sold per Household*	*Year*	*Tickets Sold per Week (in thousands)*	*Weekly Tickets Sold per Household*
1922	40,000	1.56	1946	90,000	2.37
1924	46,000	1.71	1948	90,000	2.22
1926	50,000	1.78	1950	60,000	1.38
1928	65,000	2.23	1954	49,000	1.04
1930	90,000	3.00	1958	40,000	.79
1932[a]	60,000	1.97	1960	28,000	.53
1934	70,000	2.24	1965	21,000	.37
1936	88,000	2.71	1970	15,000	.24
1938	85,000	2.52	1975	20,000	.28
1940	80,000	2.29	1980	19,600	.25
1942	85,000	2.33	1985	20,300	.23
1944	85,000	2.29			

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (Washington DC: GPO, 1960), Series H 522, p. 225; Series A 242–44, p. 15. *Continuation to 1962 and Revisions* (1965), Series H 522, p. 35.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1968), tables 11 and 302, pp. 12, 208; (1973), tables 53, 347, 349, pp. 41, 211, 212.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Current Population Reports: Population Characteristics* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1964), Series P 20, no. 6, pp. 1, 4.

Figures after 1980 are from the Motion Picture Association of America.

Note: Figures do not include Alaska and Hawaii.

[a]Drop due to the influence of the Great Depression.

innovations were tried in efforts to revive interest in the movies: wide screens, wrap-around sounds, three-dimensional photography (requiring curious red and green glasses), and, of course, lavish color. As competition increased, the older standards for production eroded. Obscene words became a routine part of the actors' vocabularies. Explicit sex and nudity characterized a number of productions; pornographic films were shown in public theaters. Themes of violence, horror, space aliens, and all kinds of special effects have been used to attract audiences back to the screen.

To a certain extent, those changes in content have worked. The number of movie screens in the United States has increased since the early 1970s—due largely to multiple-screen establishments in suburban locations. That trend appears to be continuing: in 1985, 21,147 screens were registered in the United States; that number increased to 22,384 a year later. By the beginning of 1987 it reached 22,765, and it has been estimated that there will be over 30,000 screens by 1990.[18]

Perhaps the most significant change in the motion picture industry has been in the composition of its audience. Before television altered the picture, so to speak, people of all ages went to the movies, often together as a

18. These data and the prediction were obtained from the *Motion Picture Almanac*, 59th ed. (New York: Quigley Publishing, 1988), 28A.

family. Today, movies are mostly produced for and attended by the young and relatively young. Movies are popular among those between twelve and fifteen years old (14 percent of the audience). They are even more popular among youth sixteen to twenty years old, who make up 21 percent of the audience. Young adults still like the movies and are nearly one-third of the audience—those twenty to twenty-four years old are 17 percent; those twenty-five to twenty-nine are 14 percent. Finally, those thirty to thirty-nine make up 20 percent. The age groups who hardly ever go to the movies are those over thirty-nine![19]

19. Ibid., 29A.

The composition of this audience has dramatically influenced the content of many of the films that are produced today. Horror, sex, and violence are high on the list of topics presented. The more graphic the better. With new filming technologies capable of producing remarkable special effects, blood and guts are as commonplace in today's epics as were white and black hats in earlier generations.

The movie industry, overall, has prospered financially. It joined with television in the production of films specifically for the broadcast medium. Many of the older films, some going back to the earliest days of sound tracks, are regular fare on cable TV. Modern computerized technologies have made it possible to "colorize" older black-and-white films (over which considerable controversy has erupted), and they can have a strikingly modern look.

Television Few observers would dispute the immense popularity of television. Americans started purchasing home receivers in an almost frenzied fashion as soon as they could receive a picture. It was an astonishing medium. During the first few years, many people watched an unsteady picture, on a small black-and-white screen that was often filled with "snow." They did so with a sense of wonder that they could see anything at all; like the early movie patrons, they happily viewed whatever was there.

TABLE 5

Television in the United States: Home Receiver Ownership, 1946–85

Year	*Percentage of Households with Television*	*Year*	*Percentage of Households with Television*
1946	.02	1970	95.0
1950	9.0	1975	97.0
1955	78.0	1980	98.0
1960	87.0	1985	98.0
1965	93.0		

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 106th ed. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986).

In fact, in 1950, on average, the television set was in use for four hours and thirty-five minutes a day in American homes. A decade later, that time had increased to five hours and six minutes. By 1970, it was up to five hours and fifty-six minutes. It had climbed to a mind-boggling seven hours and ten minutes by 1985!

In 1950, a short time after regular broadcasts began, less than one family in ten owned a set (Table 5). Within five years, however, an astonishing change took place: by 1955, more than three-fourths of the households in the nation had a receiver. The new medium was adopted almost overnight.

Color transmissions began in 1953, and by 1967, most programs broadcast by the networks were in color. Black-and-white sets were soon replaced in most homes, and in 1980, 83 percent received programs in color. Some 92 percent of American households had color sets by 1985.[20] Today, few black-and-white sets are still in use.

20. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States,* 106th ed. (Washington, DC: GPO, 1986).

Another significant change in the industry occurred in the manufacturing of sets. Postwar Japan became the undisputed source of high-quality electronic consumer goods. In the early period, from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, Americans purchased sets manufactured in the United States, and a thriving domestic industry existed. By about 1975, excellent Japanese sets were flooding the market at relatively low prices, and American manufacturers could not compete. Today, almost every set purchased has been imported from Japan. Even if it has an American label on the cabinet, the components inside the box are almost certainly of Japanese origin.

The major networks dominated television programming for three decades. In fact, up until about 1980, most people captured their signals from the air with an antenna mounted on the roof. In a parallel to Henry Ford's famous choice of colors for the Model T, one could watch any program one cared to—as long as it was produced and delivered by a network. Most communities had from three to five stations on the regular channels, and perhaps one or two on the ultra high frequency (UHF) spectrum.

TABLE 6

Cable Television in the United States: Systems and Subscribers, 1955–85

Year	*Number of Systems*	*Number of Subscribers* (in thousands)	*Percentage of Households with Cable*
1955	400	150	.31
1960	640	650	1.24
1965	1,325	1,275	2.22
1970	2,490	4,500	7.16
1975	3,506	9,800	13.78
1980	4,225	16,000	19.81
1985	6,600	32,000	37.30
1987	7,900	39,700	45.00 est.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1988), 527.

Compared to the present situation, they offered relatively limited choices of content but were, nevertheless, popular.

Then came cable! It began in rural areas where people could not receive an over-the-air signal because of the interference of topography. A central or community antenna (CA) received signals that were then sent via wire (for a fee) to people's homes. This CATV system worked rather well, but even in 1960 only about 2 percent of American households received their programs in this way (Table 6). A mere 640 cable companies offered subscriptions.

Then, with changes in legal restrictions, cable TV came into its own. In 1980, some 4,225 cable companies with community franchises delivered signals to about 20 percent of American homes. By 1985, that had almost doubled to about 37 percent and went to 45 percent just two years later. That rapid upward trend continues today. Cable is being adopted as fast as companies are willing to string wires.

The use of satellite delivery by certain cable channels has helped spur the adoption of cable. For example, Home Box Office (HBO), a national network delivering home movies for an additional monthly fee, transmits its movies via satellite to local cable operators, who then send them out over the wires. This mode of transmission improved picture quality considerably and made cable more enjoyable.

As more and more homes are hooked on to cable, major realignments in the entire television industry can be expected.[21] Network broadcasts can still be received via the cable, but many more channels are now available with alternative kinds of programming. Admittedly, there is less than enormous satisfaction with the new system, but it has eroded the ratings of network transmissions. Again, a new technology has caused reorganization and adjustments among the major media.

21. For a comprehensive discussion of cable: Timothy Hillis, *Beyond Broadcasting: Into the Cable Age* (London: BFI Books, 1984).

The videocassette recorder (VCR) represents another worrisome technology for network television. Developed by the Ampex Corporation in the United States, it was available to the industry as a working technology called the videotape recorder (VTR) in 1956.[22] For many years it was used mainly for the taping of shows for later broadcast or for training applications in the business world. It was long in becoming a household electronic device due to struggles over standardization and numerous court battles. Finally, during the late 1970s, Japanese manufacturers took over the medium. They solved the problem of standardization, produced high-quality machines, and brought the prices down. Since that time, the VCR has come into wide use.

22. *Newsweek*, 10 July 1970, 42.

The VCR is one of the most successful inventions ever produced. Sales have skyrocketed in the last few years: in 1983, less than 10 percent of American families had the device; by 1986, that figure had risen to some 45 percent.[23] This pattern parallels the rapid adoption of home radio receivers between 1930 and 1935 (Table 3) and of television sets between 1950 and 1955 (Table 5). The curve is still rising, and with prices continuing to fall one could predict that almost all homes will use VCRs within a decade.

23. These figures are relatively accurate estimates compiled from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract* (1986), and from the *Electronic Market Data Book* (Washington, DC: Electronic Industries Associates, 1987).

Although the VCR is capable of recording programs off the air, its greatest use is for viewing motion pictures on rented videocassettes. This has spurred a rapid growth of video rental stores, which at present form a kind of grassroots industry. Many are "mom and pop" operations, but

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cassettes can now be rented in convenience stores, filling stations, and supermarkets for as little as ninety-nine cents per night. There is something for everyone's tastes, ranging from explicit sex to Bible classics. While there is a considerable library of older films on tape, the VCR has proved to be a godsend for makers of new motion pictures. After films' initial runs in theaters, they are released on tape at considerable additional profit.

Needless to say, all of these developments are sources of nervous anxiety for television networks. There is little doubt that audiences have splintered across available cable TV channels and that large amounts of potential viewing time are occupied by watching rental movies at home. Perhaps even more disturbing is the increasing use of the remote control box to "zap" the audio part of commercial messages in advertising-supported broadcasting, which makes advertisers wonder if they are paying for audiences that are not really there. Thus, the once great networks that seemed invincible to change in the later 1960s and early 1970s are themselves being assaulted by alternative technologies.

New technologies on the horizon promise even greater changes. High-definition television (HDTV) is now a proven and reliable system that can easily be made ready for home use. It will require certain changes in the allocation of frequencies, but if adopted by the industry and suitably regulated by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), it will greatly improve the quality of the picture.

Perhaps more important is the capability to transmit television programming via satellite directly from network sources to home receivers. This technology makes use of a small dish antenna, hardly larger than a dinner plate, for home reception. It is now ready for production, and prototypes are being used. With such a dish mounted on the roof, in the attic, or even built permanently into the home structure itself, there can come a time when there will be no need for networks to make use of local stations to rebroadcast their programming. The networks could bypass such affiliates and transmit directly to the audience. If that comes about, rather drastic changes may be in store within the television industry, with the networks regaining a commanding position.

IN OVERVIEW, the story of human communication is one of continuing change with profound consequences. An enormous number of new technologies, stretching far back into history, modified, extended, and improved the means by which people have been able to share meanings with others. Each of these changes altered drastically the way of life of individuals, the culture, and the nature of the social order.

Speech brought language-dependent cognitive processes, such as memory for complex events, abstraction, classification, plus analytic and synthesizing reasoning. These are critical to problem solving and innovation and, therefore, also to the accumulation of human culture. Writing greatly extended these capacities with its new technology of portable surfaces and graphic symbols with shared meanings. Human beings could store and recover far more information than could be retained in human memory. Both time and distance were conquered. It even became possible to receive messages from people long dead!

The innovative technology of print created unprecedented changes. With a multiplicity of identical copies available, a particular set of ideas—religious, scientific, philosophical, political—could be spread over vast distances to greatly increased audiences. This had an extraordinary impact on all of civilization. Extensive developments followed in every field of thought and endeavor. Finally, even the ordinary person was brought into the communication system of print with the beginnings of the mass newspaper and the popular magazine.

We are now in a period of breathtaking advances in technology. While cable TV and VCRs are clearly changing our present system, they are minor compared with what lies just ahead. In the not-too-distant future, Americans will probably be viewing HDTV. The Pentagon announced in December 1988 that it is providing millions of research dollars to help develop it—partly to supply the military with high-resolution computer screens, and partly to help American manufacturers recover ground lost to the Japanese.[24] In addition, other currently available technologies—satellite transmissions for direct home reception and fiber optic cable networks—will change the distribution of information. Small computers will bring audience-selected (versus editor-selected) news to the home to be printed for hard copy. Videotext interactive systems now permit work, shopping, banking, and many other transactions to be conducted at home. These are not pie-in-the-sky visions of a dim tomorrow, but workable technologies that will change human capacities for communication in the immediate decades ahead.

24. *Syracuse Post-Standard* (reprinted from the *Washington Post*), 19 December 1988, 1.

I have provided a tour through these communication transitions to highlight their importance in the evolution of the human condition. The close link between communication, human thought, and the social order needs to be understood in evaluating the professional training of those who will operate and manage the media in the future. What kind of training should they receive, from whom, and with what goals in mind?

To address those questions, one more component of the mass communication system needs discussion. The media do not send their messages to an anonymous mass. Their audiences are made up of individuals from all walks of life; and the messages received interact with their psychological and sociological characteristics—their unique qualities as persons. If anything is clear, it is that the information provided in mass communications has significant influences on their ideas and their actions. As we will see, the public loves but also fears mass communications. Furthermore, that mixture of responses provides an important background for understanding early efforts to increase the level of education for journalists and for conducting research on the processes and effects of the media.

THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

When the mass press came into being, ordinary working people loved it. It quickly became, however, an object of much scorn and denunciation by intellectuals of all kinds. As the penny papers spread, educators, clergy, jurists, and many other concerned citizens came to believe that the popular newspapers were responsible for many of the ills of society. That reaction occurred in all societies where mass newspapers became popular.[25] Today,

25. For example, the French jurist and sociologist Gabriel Tarde wrote scathing criticisms of the newspapers of the 1880s. He charged that the newspapers were direcly responsible for promoting the excessive use of alcohol, immorality, delinquency, and crime (G. Tarde, *Études de psychologie social* [Paris: Giard and Brier, 1898], esp. pp. 195–204, 209–25.

a host of groups and individuals continues to condemn, censure, and advocate control over the media because of a long list of complaints. Variously, they charge that the media have too much political power, are low in aesthetic taste, exploit children, erode moral standards, legitimize the use of drugs and alcohol, stimulate violence and crime, promote needless consumerism, waste money on deceptive advertising, encourage general godlessness, advocate excessive liberalism, foster boring triviality, and treat women, minorities, and the aged in undignified ways—the list goes on and on.

Perhaps the only medium, besides books, that was ever truly valued by intellectuals was the press that existed before the emergence of penny papers. Strong constitutional protections were guaranteed in the founding documents of the United States. Those protections prevailed even as the flowering of technology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought new media and constantly changing forms of older ones. Great controversies emerged as, one by one, each new medium was eventually brought under the broad First Amendment umbrella. Like the original press, the newer media have been linked to valued concepts such as the freedom of speech, the right to know, the marketplace of ideas, and the role of watchdogs over government. Because of these meanings, plus the belief that a threat to muzzle any one is a threat to all, even the content that many citizens find deeply troubling (e.g., pornography, cigarette and liquor ads, Ku Klux Klan television presentations) is sometimes defended fiercely by segments of the intellectual community. Although challenges have come often and from many sources, the majority of citizens do not support efforts to bridle our major media with censorship. Thus, more educated Americans and the media are in a long-term relationship in which the activities of the media are fervently protected on the one hand and often deeply resented on the other.

At another level, an uneasy relationship between mass and media developed when new technologies came. For example, the conflict between the press and the public really did not begin with great passion until the last part of the nineteenth century. Advancing technologies permitted an enormous expansion in the production of newspapers. New dailies were established and competition grew keen; in fact, ferocious struggles for readers began in all major cities. To make their papers more interesting, publishers constantly sought new ways to please their subscribers, often at the expense of objective reporting. As the new press lords battled each other, thoughtful citizens worried about the daily newspaper's tendency to be preoccupied with reports of crime, sensational accounts, human interest stories, false reports of events, and comic supplements.

But even after the period of yellow journalism, the press did not notably improve its image. During World War I, the daily newspaper was the only source available for news about the hostilities. Newspapers vigorously promoted the idea that the enemy was cruel, even bestial, and that Virtue, God, and Morality were all on the side of the Allied powers. Following the war, the public was shocked by revelations of the activities of the press in publishing false propaganda during the conflict. In the 1920s, a number of people who had been in charge of developing such propaganda wrote books that showed how outrageous falsehoods had been deliberately fed

to the press portraying the people of other nations as brutal barbarians and mindless savages.[26] The press, of course, eagerly and uncritically used such material. At the time, the goal was felt to justify the means. The propagandists justified their actions on the grounds that emotions, beliefs, and loyalties of vast numbers of military personnel, industrial workers, and even ordinary citizens had to be controlled and manipulated to maximize their contributions to the war effort. Using the press as a channel to spread propaganda seemed the only way to accomplish this objective.[27]

26. George Sylvester Vierech, *Spreading Germs of Hate* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1930).

27. Harold D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (New York: Knopf, 1927).

The uneasy relationship between audiences and media came more sharply into focus following the war with the sudden appearance of the motion picture as a major medium. Again, new technology had altered the structure of mass communications in the United States. I noted earlier that during the twenties the movies became the major form of family entertainment throughout our nation. By mid-decade, millions of families were attending the movies; forty-five million admissions were sold every week. Furthermore, tens of millions of children, many very young, were going to the "picture shows" on Saturday afternoons.

The influence of the films on children was a volatile factor. Suddenly parents realized that their children were being exposed to unregulated portrayals of sex and crime. The movies glamorously portrayed the use of tobacco and alcohol (during Prohibition), gang violence, fast cars, and shoddy moral standards. An increasing chorus of voices protested that the movies were a destructive force, eroding the morals of children, filling their heads with ideas that would lead them into depravity. This public outcry had two consequences. For one thing, it caused significant changes in the content of films and in the entire movie industry. And, as I will explain in a later section, it led to the foundation of mass communications research as a field of organized, quantitative investigation based on the methods of social and behavioral sciences. In a more immediate sense, public fear of the influence of the movies forced the industry to take steps to avoid having standards imposed on motion picture content from without. Sensing a popular cause, national political figures began to look closely at what the movies were doing. At that time, movies had no First Amendment protections—that would not come for decades (1950s). Within a short time, during the early thirties, the Association of Motion Picture Producers adopted a rigid code of self-censorship, and the movies became sexually bland and almost boringly wholesome. Generally, they would provoke little further controversy until after the challenge of television, when everything changed again as a result of still newer technology.

TEACHING AND RESEARCH: MASS COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ACADEMY

My brief outline of the development of the mass communications industries in the United States has shown that the media must be considered not just individually, and not just in terms of the influence of content on audiences. They must be understood as a *system* of dynamic and competitive industries closely linked to the business and economic institutions of society on the one hand, and to scientific-technological institutions on the other. Moreover, since the media are highly regulated in American society

(by both law and informal social norms) and since they play their traditional role in the political process, they are closely linked to the institution of government as well.

As all of the foregoing quantitative and qualitative patterns have emerged, public response to the content of the media has also shown major shifts. At times the public has been very enthusiastic about mass communications. At other times, widespread concerns have arisen about what many have thought are dangerous influences of the media. These fears, whether justified or not, led the public in the early decades of the present century to turn to and support academic researchers willing to try to provide answers to their questions about the processes and effects of mass communications.

Changes in both the technology of the mass communication process and its centrality in the social institutions of society led to the development of programs of media-oriented professional education on U.S. campuses. As the number of the media grew, as they became more complex, as they reached out to increasing numbers of eyes and ears, and as concern about their effects mounted, the need for ever-larger numbers of educated, professionally trained media specialists grew apace. Both a trained labor force to manage the media and scholars to study their influences were needed.

Thus, the currently controversial schools of journalism and mass communications, which try to provide both professional education and research on media processes and influences, did not drop from the sky. They exist in their present form on our campuses as *consequences* of vast technological, social, and cultural changes that have occurred over the last two centuries—industrialization, immigration, urbanization, and modernization. They have only a short tradition on campus because the changes that helped shape their present organization have occurred, for the most part, in the present century. Indeed, most have come during the last half of this century. Degree programs providing professional preparation in higher education in journalism did not begin in a systematic way until after 1900, and quantitative research on the effects of mass communications began even more recently.

Higher Education for Journalists Although the mass press was well established by the middle of the last century, the idea of a "profession" of journalists that would develop and exercise ethical codes or standards for the treatment of topics in the press did not exist. There were no schools, programs, or centers for training journalists. For understandable reasons, in the intellectual community, newspapers, editors, publishers, and journalists in general were all held in low esteem. The performance of both the early mass newspapers and those of the later nineteenth century brought widespread condemnation, which lasted for decades. For example, Samuel Clemens, who had himself served as a journalist, captured that view when, with perhaps a certain exaggeration, he wrote:

> *That awful power, the public opinion of the nation, is formed and molded by a horde of ignorant and self-complacent simpletons who failed at ditching and shoemaking and fetched up in journalism on their way to the poorhouse.*[28]

28. S. Clemens, *Mark Twain's Speeches* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), 47.

In a century when editors of newspapers were horsewhipped in the streets by disgruntled citizens, many Americans shared those sentiments.

In any case, efforts to provide professional education at the university level for journalists had very modest beginnings. General Robert E. Lee, who after the Civil War became president of what is now Washington and Lee University, tried to get a program in printing started in 1869. The effort was not successful, but Kansas State College did begin such a program in 1873.[29] The University of Missouri started teaching courses in journalism a short time later (1878), but it was the University of Pennsylvania that began the first program in journalism studies in 1893. The first four-year curriculum was offered by the University of Illinois starting in 1904. A school of journalism was established in 1908 at the University of Missouri.

29. This brief historical sun mary is drawn in part fro Emery and Emery, *The Pr and America,* 513–15.

After the turn of the century, numerous institutions added degree programs and professional sequences in the field. Even before World War II, graduate programs were established, often in close relationship with various social sciences. Distinguished universities—Columbia, Stanford, Illinois, Minnesota, and others—pioneered the development of research and doctoral programs, not only in journalism as such but in the study of mass communications as a whole. Over the years, specialized technical journals were founded for the publication of a rapidly escalating body of research findings and theoretical explanations. Professional associations came into existence to hold annual conventions where educators, scholars, and practitioners could exchange ideas.

Today, student interest in the communications industries runs high. Several of the largest schools have thousands of majors in such degree sequences. For example, the programs at Michigan State University (the largest) regularly enroll over four thousand majors. Syracuse University's S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications is the largest in a private university, with some two thousand majors. Even relatively small institutions now offer course sequences or have departments of mass communications. For example, the State University of New York at Oswego has six hundred majors. Tens of thousands of graduates from U.S. colleges and universities compete for jobs in the industries every year.

Research Begins Another relatively new figure in higher education is the research scholar specializing in the study of the processes and effects of mass communications. It was not until the media of the twentieth century arrived—and the public began to be deeply concerned about their influences—that systematic, quantitative, and large-scale research began on the influences of mass communications.

I noted earlier that a lasting consequence of the great outcry over the movies during the mid-1920s was that it brought social scientists into the controversy. Just what were the influences of this new medium on children? Was it true that these moving pictures, which were so much fun to watch, actually were insidious forces for evil, as their critics maintained? A private foundation—the Payne Fund—agreed in the late 1920s to support a rather massive set of investigations into the impact of movies on children. The goal was to provide objective information based on the best science then available. During that decade, the social sciences had begun with

enthusiasm to use the quantitative techniques that applied statisticians had invented and that had proved so valuable in the biological and agricultural sciences. Furthermore, they had invented many innovative ways to measure human factors, such as attitudes, belief structures, and various patterns of behavior. With these new tools and adequate funding, thirteen major studies were completed, involving experiments, surveys, and other observations on tens of thousands of children.[30]

At the time, the Payne Fund studies seemed to support the critics; but in later years, their findings would become controversial. As the understanding of research methods became increasingly sophisticated, early efforts came to be seen as crude and flawed. In retrospect, their main contribution was not that they provided final answers about the influence of the movies, but that they launched a tradition of academic research that would quickly expand to include efforts from many fields. During the following decades, those efforts would produce a huge body of scientific literature on the influence of mass communications on human beings. The basic social sciences all have continued to contribute heavily to that body of knowledge.[31]

All of these developments established the research side of mass communications education, which should not be ignored in discussions about criticism of the area as part of a university curriculum. That research side has now been firmly institutionalized, and today it is in no way different from its counterparts in related social and behavioral sciences, except for its more recent origins. Doctoral programs in media studies are now well established within schools of journalism and mass communications, and a corps of specialists is advancing knowledge of the role and influence of the media in modern life.

Thus, more than half a century after the original Payne Fund studies set the field into motion as a focus of scientific investigation, communications scholars and researchers now have at their disposal several complex theories that guide their research, including many that are the subjects of lively debates. Perhaps more important, there is considerable consensus about how research should be conducted. From the outset, a commitment was made to follow the same standards of quantitative testing of ideas that are found in closely related social sciences.

IMPLICATIONS

All of the trends I have discussed, in society, among the media, with the public, and on campus, are still in progress. Our urban-industrial society continues to be transformed from one based on the production of goods to one uniquely dependent on the transmission, processing, and use of information.[32] Furthermore, as our media gain in sophistication and ubiquity, we are increasingly becoming a "media society":[33] citizens are more and more influenced by, and must turn to, information that they can obtain only from media sources. In fact, not only individuals but groups, large organizations, and even social institutions (e.g., government, education, religion) rely more and more on media-delivered information.

In short, like it or not, mass communications and society are mutually dependent, and that dependence is growing. Life as we know it in the

30. For a summary of the thirteen volumes of research reports: W. W. Charters, *Motion Pictures and Youth: A Summary* (New York: Macmillan, 1934).

31. By the end of the 1950s, hundreds of research studies on the effects of mass communications had been published. Their implications up to that time are summarized in Joseph Klapper, *The Effects of Mass Communication* (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press of Glencoe, 1960). During the 1970s and 1980s, research on the effects of mass communications grew at an exponential rate. In a recent government survey of the effects of just one medium (television) on behavior, more than three thousand studies were cited, of which three-fourths had appeared after 1975 (D. Pearl, L. Bouthelet, and J. Lazar, *Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties* [Washington, DC: GPO, 1982]).

32. See J. Herbert Altschull, "The Uneasy World of the 'Information Society,'" in *Agents of Power: The Rôle of the Mass Media in Human Affairs*, 263–72 (New York: Longman, 1985).

33. Everette E. Dennis, *The Media Society: Evidence about Mass Communication in America* (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1978).

United States could not exist without mass media, and they will play an increasing role in our nation's affairs. New fields of study related to all parts of our emerging media systems have, from time to time, been added to older educational curricula focusing more specifically on journalism as such. As radio, motion pictures, and television became huge industries, degree programs were designed to provide students with professional education in those fields. Today, even newer sequences have been added. Advertising and public relations are becoming institutionalized as significant specializations among the media-related professions. That all of these programs have come only recently does not diminish their importance to our media society.

Perhaps because they are newcomers, or perhaps because many people do not like various aspects of our media system, a host of critics stands in the wings firing advice and complaints at contemporary programs of media-related higher education. As Everette Dennis noted in his opening article, their list of charges is both long and often contradictory. Variously, they suggest that we ignore the media altogether (presumably on the grounds that they may then go away); that it is not worthwhile to provide professional degree programs of higher education for their future managers; that if we insist on media-related degree programs, they should have second-class status on campus as compared to older fields of study; that existing programs are not oriented toward the practical world of the media; that they are actually vocational schools and insufficient in theory; that systematic research on their processes and effects is really the main objective; or that such research is not worth pursuing. It is a strange list.

However, as I have tried to show in this brief summary of the size and importance of mass communications in modern life, the media will not go away, and they urgently require professionally prepared personnel. They are far too important to all of us to allow them to train their own, or to turn the task over to unsophisticated mentors. Those who will be entrusted with the power that our media represent, with the economic forces that they command, and with the influences they can have on us individually and socially, should be drawn from the most able people available in our society. Furthermore, given the size, influence, and centrality of the media, it would be a curious position indeed to maintain that research concerning their processes and effects is not worthwhile. Obviously, the real questions center on what kind of education future communications professionals need most and on what kind of professors should offer it. Some of these questions are addressed in the following articles. ❖

Melvin L. DeFleur *occupies the John Ben Snow Endowed Chair in the S. I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University. He received his B.A. (psychology) from St. Louis University, and both his M.S. (psychology) and his Ph.D. (sociology) from the University of Washington in Seattle. Before coming to Syracuse in 1987, he served on the faculties of Indiana University, the University of Kentucky, Washington State University, and the University of Miami. DeFleur has published numerous articles in professional journals and eight books, including* ***Theories of Mass Communication,*** *with S. Ball-Rokeach (published in several languages and now in its fifth edition);* ***Milestones in Mass Communication Research,*** *with S. Lowery (now in its second edition); and* ***Understanding Mass Communication,*** *with E. Dennis (now in its fourth edition).*