

John Durham Peters

Born in 1958, USA

American Yale Professor of Film and Media studies

A media historian and social theorist, he has authored a number of noted scholarly works

He believes the term "communication" connotes an ideal state in which miscommunication is impossible and humans have not always communicated with one another

Communication is not the same as talking

Developments in media technology enabled the idea of 'communication,' exposing the possibility for misfires, wrong numbers, and missing letters.

In the late 19th century, communication emerges as a concern and a source of social anxiety

"mesmerising the masses and isolating individuals."

"Just as the bomb shaped the imagery of information in communication theory, so it made palpable the potential of communication gone wrong."

Marshall McLuhan

Canadian media theorist (1911--1980)

Became a global celebrity in the 60s

Known for bold, aphoristic prognostications

He was often very wrong

His ideas about the about the 'global village' and instantaneous, simultaneous culture facilitated by electronic media fit the digital age (better than the tv age)

McLuhan explained in "the medium is the message," that technologies that are used to communicate eventually affect the people who utilise them

Media theory is about personal and the social

A medium is an extension of ourselves

This extension creates a new 'scale' in our 'affairs'

A new 'scale' entails social consequences

Key point that distinguishes McLuhan from other media theorists, is that he focused on the medium itself not the content

Marshall McLuhan (cont)

The electric light is the medium without the message par excellence

The content of the electric light could be anything like a night surgery or a night baseball match, things that one could not do otherwise

There is nothing to decode - the message of the medium is not the content

The 'content' of the medium is in fact another medium

Example: speech>writing>print>telegraph>email>text>-message

Media forms as extension of 'man.' - Print extends the eyes; the radio extends the ear; electrical media extend the nervous system

All media have a particular 'grammar' and this what we must study, 'the change of scale or pace or pattern that they introduce into human affairs' (McLuhan, 2001 [1964], p. 8).

Accordingly to McLuhan, cinema has change our sense of perception

Marshall McLuhan pt. 2

Another key idea is the notion of **Hot and Cold media**

Hot media engage one sense completely, and demands less participation (radio, printed book, a lecture)

Cold media are 'low-definition,' meaning they engage several senses less completely and demand more participation (television, comic books, seminars)

McLuhan argues that new media tend to 'cool down' older media; tv is more participatory then film, hypertext is more participatory than text

Theories of digital media - his key arguments is that electric media leads to a re-tribalization

Print media is linear, segmented, uniform. It fits with homogeneous, national culture

Electric media emphasises instantaneous communication, the 'all-at-once' of integration and immersion man

A return to the communal orientation of oral culture and a 'global village'

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Marshall McLuhan pt. 2 (cont)

Interactive and participatory like oral culture but also instantaneous and translational because of electric media

Print literacy less relevant under electronic media

We need to think about the role of the 'feed' and 'the stream' rather than literacy which lose relevance because digital media is a cool medium and require a different kind of engagement

McLuhan received criticism for his bold predictions not always backed with evidence

(Critic) Technological determinism: He assumes the medium has predetermined effects

(Critic) Underestimates human agency - Technology use is socially constructed; people shape how media are used

His ideas, however, worked better with digital media than with television.

Walter Benjamin

German philosopher (1892--1940)

He wrote on Marxism, literature, aesthetics, German Romanticism, Jewish mysticism. Associated with Frankfurt school

Died fleeing the Nazis in 1940

'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' must be understood in relation to the material history of its production (how it came to be made), reception (how it is viewed) and the reproduction (how it is disseminated)

Lev Manovich

Henry Jenkins



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