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Dorian Benkoil senior consultant at Teeming Media. An award-winning journalist and editor, he was a foreign correspondent for AP and Newsweek, and international and managing editor for ABCNews.com. At ABC News he moved to the business side, handling sales integration and business development, before joining Fairchild Publications as General Manager for their Internet division, becoming editorial director for mediabistro.com, then a consultant for Teeming Media in New York. He graduates this year with an MBA from Baruch's Zicklin school of business. Learn more about him at Benkoil.com or his blog - MediaFlect.com.

Robert Cauthorn is a journalist, former vice president of digital media at the San Francisco Chronicle, and was the third recipient of the Newspaper Association of America's

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Rebuilding Media

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April 27, 2006

What is 'New Media'? ✉

Posted by **Vin Crosbie**

[*I earlier this week* wrote *that:*

> The radical changes the newspaper industry needs to implement arise from a more true understanding by that industry of why newspaper readership began declining well before the Internet was opened to the public; about why one billion people worldwide have gone onto the Internet after it was opened to the public (*they didn't do it to read traditional media on computer screens*), and about why all that plus the misnamed and illusionary 'fracturing' of media audiences requires semantic solutions.

At the root of that problem is a misunderstanding about what the New Medium actually is; a misunderstanding by almost all companies that broadcast programs or that publish newspapers or magazines.

I've long been reluctant to explain this misunderstanding only because I'll need a long post to explain it. This is that post, a new version of my 1998 essay What is New Media? *(which is currently being taught in the journalism, film, technology, and game design courses at several universities in North America and Europe). It's 3,200-words long, but I consider it the most important thing I have ever written except for the original essay. I need to have this new version online because I plan to refer to it in future postings, specifically those about what radical changes that media companies need to implement.*]

Misunderstanding 'New Media'

A newspaper *isn't* a medium, *nor* are newspapers media. Magazines *aren't* media *nor* is a magazine a medium. Television *isn't* a medium *nor* is radio *nor* are radio or television stations media. A website *isn't* a medium *nor* is the Internet media.

Companies that broadcast programs or that publish newspapers or magazines are having problems understanding and adapting to why and how one billion consumers are now using Internet-based technologies to receive news, information, and entertainment.

Those companies have the problems simply because they misunderstand the meaning of *media* or *medium*. It is that starkly simple. Their misunderstanding of these terms-- not the new technologies that consumers use -- is the root of the companies' problems.

Ask their executives if they work in the '*Mass Media*' (the *Mass Medium*)

RSS
RSS

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prestigious Digital Pioneer Award. He launched one of the first five newspapers web sites in the world and is generally considered to have delivered the first profitable newspaper web site in 1995. Cauthorn has been in the middle of the transition from old media to new and is recognized as frank-talking critic when he believes newspapers stray for their mission. In mid-2004 he became the president of CityTools, LLC a new media startup based in San Francisco.

Ben Compaine has divided his career between the academic world and private business. He was a journalist when manual typewriters were considered state of the art, but also led the conversion of his college newspaper to cold type. He has started and managed weekly newspapers. His dissertation at Temple University in 1977 was about the changing technologies that were going to unsettle the landscape of the staid and low profit newspaper industry. Since then he has focused his research and consulting on examining the forces and trends at work in the information industries. Among his most well-known works (and the name of his blog) is "Who Owns the Media?".

Vin Crosbie has been called "the Practical Futurist" by *Folio*, the trade journal of the American magazine industry. *Editor & Publisher* magazine, the trade journal of the American newspaper industry, devoted the Overview chapter of executive research report *Digital Delivery of News: A How-to Guide for Publishers* to his work. His speech to the National Association of Broadcasters annual conference was one of 24 orations selected by a team of speech professors for publication in the reference book *Representative American Speeches 2004-2005*. He has keynoted the Seybold Publishing Strategies conference in 2000; co-chaired and co-moderated last year's annual Beyond the Printed Word the digital publishing conference in Vienna; and regularly speaks at most major online news media conferences. He is currently in residence as adjunct professor of visual and interactive communications and senior consultant on executive education in new media at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, and meanwhile is managing partner of the media consulting firm of Digital Deliverance LLC in Greenwich, Connecticut.

and they will be correct if they reply yes. But almost all will take that a step further — a misstep — and say that their broadcast, newspaper, or magazine is a *medium*.

Rhetoricians and cognitive linguists refer to that extra step as metonymy: the use of a well-understood or easy-to-perceive characteristic of something to stand for either a much more complex whole or for some aspect or part of it. (Another example of metonymy is use of the name *Hollywood* to describe the entire film industry worldwide)

Broadcast and publishing executives mistake *Mass Media* as a catchall phrase for *all possible media*, as if no other medium can exist except as a Mass Medium. Moreover, they extend this mistaken meaning of *medium* to cover their own broadcasts or publications.

So entrenched has the contemporary misunderstanding of the terms *media* and *medium* become that the mistake limits the abilities of most publishing or broadcasting executives to comprehend what exactly is a *medium* or the *media* in which they work.

So, *what are media, what is a medium?*

I'll answer, explain how only three media exist and how previously just two did, and define the New Medium ('New Media'). But let's first take a moment to look at how today's colloquial meaning of *media* or *medium* is a relatively recent mistake.

If you were to ask a person in the year 1506, 1606, 1706, 1806, or 1906, medium they used for their news, they wouldn't understand what you asked. They simply wouldn't comprehend your use of the word *medium*. (Indeed, if you had asked anyone in 1506, 1606, or 1706 what medium they used to get their news, they might think you were accusing them of using a *witch* to tell them about current events -- a serious crime back then!)

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the colloquial meaning of *medium* is a latecomer to the publishing industry. It dates only from around 1880 — a quarter millennium after publication of the first daily newspapers and 150 years after publication of the first magazines:

> **Medium** ('mi:diem), *sb*. and *a*. Pl. Mediia, -iums. [a. L. Medium, neuter of *medius* middle, cogn. With MID a.] A. *sb* 5. a. An intermediate agency, means, instrument or channel. Also, intermediation, instrumentality: in phrase *by* or *through the medium of*. spec. of newspapers, radio, television , etc. As vehicles of mass communication . Also *attrib*. And in *pl*. (see MEDIA) 1880 *Coach Builders' Art Jrnl*. I. 63: 'Considering your Journal one of the best possible mediums for such a scheme.'

The colloquial plural media is even more a latecomer. The *OED* says it dates from only a few years after rise of the first commercial radio stations and is a term borrowed from the advertising industry:

> **Media** ('mi:dia), *sb. pl*. [Pl. F MEDIUM *sb*., prob. After *mass media*.] Newspapers, radio, television, etc., collectively, as vehicles of mass communication. Freq. *attrib*. or as *adj*. Also erron. As sing. in same sense. **1923** [see **mass medium**].

> **Mass medium** (,maes 'mi:diem). [f. MASS *sb*. + MEDIUM *sb*.] A medium of communications (such as radio, television, newspapers, etc.) that reaches a large number of people; usu. In pl. *mass media*.
> **1923** S. M. FECHHEIMER in N. T. Praigg *Advertising & Selling* v.

ABOUT THIS BLOG

Two forces have shattered the news media. Technology is the first. Although media technology is undergoing its greatest change since the day in 1440 when Johannes Gutenberg first inked type, for more than ten years now the news industry has mistaken new technologies merely as electronic ways to distribute otherwise printed or analog products. Estrangement is the second. The news media has lost touch with people's needs and interests during the past 30 years, as demonstrated by rapidly declining readerships of newspapers and audiences of broadcast news. How we rebuild news media appropriate to the 21st Century from the growing rubble of this industry is the subject of this group weblog.

238 (title) Class appeal in mass media. *Ibid*. The several million readers of a big mass medium. G. SNOW in Ibid. 240 'Mass media represents the most economical way of getting the story over the new and wider market in the least time.'

I'm not playing semantics here. When I state that the publishing and broadcasting industries' colloquial usages of the terms *medium* and *media* are wrong, I'm not trying to define new meanings for those terms. Instead, I'm returning to the previous meanings that those terms had had for millennia (prior to the Advertising Industry coining the current colloquialism in 1923). That is the key to understanding what is the New Medium or, even for that matter, what is the Mass Medium.

Discard Preconceptions and the Misunderstanding

There is a saying about Einstein's Theory of Relativity: that what makes it difficult for some people to comprehend is its simplicity. That you don't need to acquire more information to understand it, but that you must instead *discard preconceived notions* that block your understand. There is a similar saying about Quantum Theory.

Understanding the New Medium is like that, too.

To understand the New Medium, discard the colloquial meanings of *medium* and *media*. Don't confuse a Medium for its Vehicles. What most people today think are *media* are actually *vehicles* within a *medium*.

A newspaper *isn't* a medium, *nor* are newspapers media. Magazines *aren't* media *nor* is a magazine a medium. Television *isn't* a medium *nor* is radio *nor* are radio or television stations media.

Likewise, a personal computer connected to the Internet *isn't* a medium and the millions of computers connected to the Internet *aren't* media. *Neither* is a website a medium *nor* are websites media. The World Wide Web *isn't* a medium *nor* is e-mail a medium *nor* is the Internet itself a medium or media.

Newspapers, magazines, television, radio, telephones, billboards, personal computers, the Internet, the World Wide Web, and e-mail all are *vehicles* for conveying information within a *medium* or *media*. These vehicles aren't the media or a medium in which they operate.

To understand the difference between a *vehicle* and a *medium* for information or communication, you merely need to comprehend how the terms *medium, media,* and *vehicles* are correctly used when discussing transportation.

Although there are numerous types of vehicles, only three transportation media exist:

Land was the aboriginal transportation medium; it was the first transportation medium. Humans have walked on it since time immemorial. We still do. But we've also built vehicles to help convey us in this medium: carts, chariots, carriages, bicycles, trains, automobiles, trucks and lorries, etc.

Water is the second transportation medium. Human's usage of it as a transportation medium is almost as old as humanity's use of land, dating from whenever the first human attempted to ride a floating log or to swim across a stream, river, or lake. We've since created vehicles to convey use in this medium: rafts, canoes, barges, sailboats, ships, submarines, etc.

Before I list the third transportation medium, please note some characteristics of these two traditional transportation media, because you'll find that these characteristics have analogues in informational or communicational media:

- Note first that humans' usage of those two ancient transportation media predate technology. Technology has merely extended our speed and carrying capacities in these media.
- Also note that humanity's uses of these two media aren't necessarily dependent upon technology. Most of us can walk and swim without using any technology.
- And note that each of the vehicles for these media is limited by its medium. Trains don't operate on water nor do steamships operate on land. Indeed, land and water have mutually exclusive characteristics as media and reaches. *Mutually exclusive advantages and disadvantages.* This will become an important point when we bridge — no pun intended — this analogy towards informational and communicational media

For many millennia, anyone who needed transportation faced a *choice* of using either one of these two transportation media. His choice would have been based upon where that medium reached or its carrying capacity.

For examples, water vehicles have almost global reach but not to landlocked places. Most water vehicles also have much greater carrying capacities than do land vehicles. But most land vehicles can deliver anyone door-to-door, a capability that most water vehicle can't provide (unless they are in Venice).

For almost all of recorded history, humans have used the medium of water and its vehicles for most of their long distance transportation needs, but have used the medium of land and its vehicles for most of their daily transportation needs. *A third transportation medium had been inconceivable.*

That was until 1903. Or, more accurately, 1783, which was when two French brothers named Montgolfier used their era's technologies to build a vehicle that opened an new transportation medium. Joseph Michel and Jacques Étienne Montgolfier built a huge globe of sackcloth and paper, covered it with a huge fishnet, let hot air from a fire rise beneath it, put their friend Jean-François Pilâtre de Rozier into a basket hung beneath the globe, and then let him rise in this balloon into the sky. Aviation was born. The **Sky** became a transportation medium.

In 1903, after studying 18th Century experiments by the German Otto Lilenthal with airfoils and gliders, the Wright Brothers married an engine to a glider and made aviation practical for everyday use. Last year, airlines took more than 4 billion passengers through the transportation *medium* of the sky. Among this medium's *vehicles* are balloons, parachutes, gliders, airplanes, helicopters, and spacecraft.

Note that this new transportation medium is *entirely dependent upon technology*, unlike use of the two other transportation media. The sky isn't a natural medium for humans; people can walk and swim without technology, but cannot fly.

Note too that the vehicles of this new transportation medium can operate either of the water or land media go. Anywhere on Earth. Though the transportation media of Land and Water have mutually exclusive reaches, this new transportation medium — the Sky —

encompasses the reaches of *both* land and water. It overcomes the complementary advantages and disadvantages of the two prior, traditional media.

So, let's now take this analogy about media back from transportation to communications and information. What's it to do with the traditional media companies and the problems they have understanding and adapting to why and how one billion consumers have begun using Internet-based technologies to receive news, information, and entertainment?

Only Three Media Exist

Just as only three transportation media exist, *only three communications media exist*:

As with transportation media, two of these communication media are ancient and people's usage of the two arose independent of technology. However, the third medium is relatively new and is *entirely dependent upon technology*:

Oddly, the first and earliest of the three communications media is the only one not to have a commonly accepted name, not even misnoner. I call it the **Interpersonal Medium**.

This aboriginal medium arose in basic animal communications, predating humans and technology. Interpersonal *conversation* is the basic form of this medium. It is the most heavily used communication medium. Technology has mereely extended its speed and reach. Vehicles that human later built for it include the postal letter, telephone call, and electronic mail.

Just as the transportation medium of Land (or, for that matter, water) has some unique characteristics, so too does the Interpersonal Medium of communications. Its two hallmark are:

- Each participant in it has equal and reciprocal control of the content conveyed.
- That content can be individualized to each participant's unique needs and interests.

However, those hallmark advantages have corresponding disadvantages:

- The equal control, and also the individualization, of the content degrades into cacophony as the number of participants increases. The more people participating in a conversation, the less control each has over its content and how well that content matches the participant's individual needs and interests.

For those reasons, this medium is generally used for communications only between two people. Some academics that study communications refer to it the *'one-to-one'* medium, although many marketers misapply that term to the New Medium.

The **Mass Medium** is the second communications medium.

Most people mistake the Mass Medium as a byproduct of technology and don't realize how old it really is. Like the Interpersonal, the Mass Medium predates technology. It originated with the utterances and speeches of tribal leaders, kings, and priests. Technology has merely

extended its speed and its reach to global dimensions.

Some vehicles in the Mass Medium are oratory, sermons, edicts, , scriptures, plays, books, newspapers, billboards, magazines, cinema, radio, television, bulletin boards, and
webcasting.

Communications in the Mass Medium generally go from a one person (for examples, a leader, a king, priest, publisher, or broadcaster) to many people (the tribe, mass, audience, readership, listenership, viewership). This is why some academics term it the 'one-to-many' medium, but most people colloquially refer to it as Mass Media, despite it being only one medium for communication.

The hallmarks of the Mass Medium are:

- That *exactly the same content* goes to all recipients.
- That the *one* who sends it has absolute control over that content.

However, the corresponding disadvantages of the Mass Medium are:

- Its *content cannot be individualized* to each recipient's unique needs and interests and that the *recipients have no control* over that content.

Like the Interpersonal, the Mass Medium isn't necessarily dependent upon technology. For example, an actor or speaker can perform before the masses without any technology.

Before I define the third communications medium -- explaining what the New Medium really is -- please again note how the prior two media have reciprocal advantages and disadvantages, similar to how the transportation media of land and water have mutually exclusive characteristics

- The Interpersonal Medium can deliver an individualized message but generally just to one person at any time.
- The Mass Medium can simultaneously deliver or display to an almost infinite number of people, but its messages cannot be individualized for each recipient.

Likewise:

- The Interpersonal Medium allows each participant equal control over the content.
- The Mass Medium allows control over the content by only one person.

Those mutually exclusive characteristics of the Interpersonal and Mass media had meant that anyone who wanted to communicate faced a *choice*: He could communicate either the *same information to everyone* or else *custom-tailor the information for just one recipient*. He couldn't custom-tailor information to a mass of recipients; that would have been inconceivable.

That was true until about a dozen years ago.

The New Medium

But then -- just like how then-new technologies were used a century ago to make the sky a new and practical medium for transportation -- new technologies have now been used to create the **New Medium** for communications. *It is a new communication medium that, like Sky for prior transportation media, bridges the mutually incompatible characteristics of prior communications media.*

Among the technologies needed to create this New Medium were the invention of digital communications during the late 1940s, invention of the Transport Control/Internet Protocol ((TCP/IP) during the late 1960s, ARPANET's creation of the Internet and other people's invention of the personal computer during in the 1970s, and to lesser extents the invention of the HyperText Transport Protocol (HTTP) in the late 1980s, opening of the Internet to the public in 1992, and invention of the graphical browser software later that year. Those and other technological innovations converged to create a new communications medium that has characteristics inconceivable even a decade ago.

The hallmark characteristics of the New Medium are:

- *Uniquely individualized information can simultaneously be delivered or displayed to a potentially infinite number of people.*
- *Each of the people involved — whether publisher, broadcasters, or consumer — shares equal and reciprocal control over that content.*

In other words, the New Medium has the advantages of both the Interpersonal and the Mass media, but without their complementary disadvantages.

- No longer must anyone who wants to individually communicate a unique message to each recipient be restricted to communicating with *only* one person at a time.
- No longer must anyone who wants to communicate simultaneous messages to a mass of recipients be *unable* to individualize the content of the message for each recipient.

Again, please note that the New Medium for communications, as with use of the transportation medium of the sky, is *entirely dependent upon technology* unlike its two preceding media. It is not a natural communications medium for humans; it does something that a human cannot naturally do without technology.

Colloquially known as 'New Media' or 'the New Media', *the New Medium is not whatever content or device is used online* (or wirelessly, on an iPod, etc.). Any item of content is generally independent of any medium. Likewise, most vehicles and devices are generally independent of medium. (There obviously are exceptions: You won't receive much content plugging newsprint into the Internet or using a canoe as a transportation vehicle on land.)

Some Misapplications

Simply because the New Medium *encompasses* the characteristics and the reach of both of its predecessors and therefore can easily perform each of those media's capabilities, *many people mistake the New Medium as merely an electronic extension previous media*.

This misunderstanding is particular prevalent among publishing and broadcast executives or others who've worked in the Mass Medium. They see the New Medium and its vehicles only as a *paperless* or *antenna-less* form of Mass Medium — a perspective that neglects the New Medium's full potential.

A website *can* be a vehicle to display Mass Medium content, which indeed is how most newspapers, magazines, and broadcasts use it. However, that merely replicates online *the hallmark limitations of Mass Medium* and doesn't take advantage of the New Medium's ability to display a precise match of specific information to each and every recipient's individual needs and interests, however different those receipients may be.

Moreover, because each recipient in the New Medium shares with all publishers and broadcasters equal and reciprocal control over what that recipient gets — *either by each recipient's choices of which publishers' or broadcasters' websites to visit or else increasingly by mechanisms that allow the recipient to aggregate that content without visiting each of those publishers' or broadcasters' sites* — these New Medium consumers are leaving behind the traditional Mass Medium's packaging of information.

Each is migrating towards whatever *mix of content most precisely matches* her own uniquely individual needs and interests. *This is why more than one billion consumers have migrated into the New Medium*; it allows them more precise satisfaction of their needs and interests. They didn't migrate into the New Medium to read, see, or hear a Mass Medium package of information online — information they were receiving from traditional Mass Medium vehicles in more readily usable forms.

Nevertheless, almost all publishing and broadcasting companies still make the mistake of providing only the traditional Mass Medium package of information online. Many of those companies also mistakenly term themselves *interactive* merely because they now also operate *online*.

Interactivity, as long ago defined by Dr. Jonathan Steuer in the *Journal of Communications* is "the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form and content of a mediated environment in real time." That is a far cry from simply letting the user read Mass Medium newspaper, magazines, or broadcast content that has been shoveled online.

Within the next ten years, most New Medium consumers will be receiving information from each's choice of myriad broadcasters and publishers, perhaps too *many* for any individual consumer to name or even realize. (Early adopters of tag-driven XML, advanced RSS, and 'peer-to-peer' technologies have already begun making such use). Because these *many* consumers will be sharing content choices and control with all publisher and broadcasters, the New Medium serves not just a 'one-to-one' or 'one-to-many' medium but a 'many-to-many' one.

Publisher and broadcasters who don't make full use of the New Medium will likely be left behind and wither during this new century.

Comments (27) + TrackBacks (0) | Category: Infrastructure

COMMENTS

1. Les on April 28, 2006 3:26 PM writes...

I had read the 1998 article, and so eagerly sat down to read this one. The concepts are just as thought provoking when read today. The article provides both clarity of terms and clarity of concepts. Well done.

Permalink to Comment

2. Amy Gahran on April 30, 2006 9:06 AM writes...

Excellent work, Vin. I'm sure I'll have a lot to say about this, and I'll be referring back to it often. I want to take some time right now to mull it over, but just quickly I wanted to thank you for taking the time to explain this so clearly.

- Amy Gahran

Contentious.com
RightConversation.com
E-Media Tidbits editor (Poynter Inst.)

Permalink to Comment

3. Amy Gahran on April 30, 2006 10:09 AM writes...

Hi again, Vin

Just wanted to let you know I just told Poynter E-Media Tidbits about this essay of yours. See: http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=31&aid=100685

Will you be continuing this line of thought, in this blog or elsewhere? I'd especially love to see your thoughts on what steps news/media organizations might take to use this perception shift to escape "the butcher."

...Oh, and you might want to remove all the spam comments from this thread, too ;-)

Hope to hear more from you on this,

- Amy Gahran
Contentious.com
RightConversation.com
Editor, Poynter's E-Media Tidbits

Permalink to Comment

4. Claus Solvsteen on May 1, 2006 2:22 AM writes...

Very interesting thoughts - and yes, the world does need a common definition of the term 'media' or 'medium'.

I used to say that the internet is both a vehicle for transporting old media - like PDF, streaming audio and video - AND it provides for new media characterized by virtues that are only possible because of the internet.

Looking at your definition of the new medium, I think that the 'one-to-many personalized communication' is more of a theoretical possibility. In daily life that kind of communication is characterized by crm-marketing driven spamlike communication which I am sure you agree is different from a true personal communication. I mean: The

content needs to be perceived as personal in order to be defined as such, right?

While reading your thoughts I was sure that you would end up describing the 'new medium' as a many-to-many medium. This defifition follows nicely the one-to-one and one-to-many.

Many-to-many seems to be what is really changing and reshaping our communication. Like in citizen journalism, forums, wikis and .. hey: Blogcomments :-)

Permalink to Comment

5. anon on May 1, 2006 9:08 AM writes...

Jeesh. Hire an editor. I've got better things to do than read through 1,000 words of drivel waiting for you to GET TO SOMETHING RESEMBLING A POINT.

Permalink to Comment

6. Mindy McAdams on May 1, 2006 9:27 AM writes...

Hi, Vin. I posted a response here:
http://tojou.blogspot.com/2006/05/what-is-medium.html
I like a lot of what you said, but my view of media differs in several ways from yours.

Permalink to Comment

7. Corbin Supak on May 27, 2006 1:59 PM writes...

Thanks, very good stuff. I find it relevant for my role as a teacher of electronic arts at an arts magnet school for 6th-12th graders, and for the staff of the school who struggle with differentiated learners, 30+ of them in any room at any time. Also helps me with my thinking of how to reinvent the course offerings to better suit each of our arts-focused students (600 of them), while still delivering all the core academic content they need to succeed and move on.

Permalink to Comment

8. Rick on September 14, 2006 12:33 PM writes...

I have to agree with anon above. What a terrific waste of time to, despite the author's denial, simply play semantics with the word "media". I don't have any particular problem with your definition of new media, though perhaps a more accurate and useful term with be "new communication". Taking your argument to a logical extreme, I suppose advertisers who are using databases to do direct mail that starts "Dear Rick" are utilizing new media, and what a sad understatement that is for what is unquestionably the most democratic and radical form of communication humankind has ever had. Again, it's too bad you wasted so many words instead of getting to a more valuable point.

Permalink to Comment

9. Vin Crosbie on September 18, 2006 5:26 PM writes...

Rick:

Glad you liked my concision.

Are advertisers who are using databases to do direct mail that starts "Dear Rick" using new media? No, because there's a more than semantic difference between personalization and individualization. The junk mail you receive is personalized to you, but not individualized -- it's the same mail to everyone.

I agree that your suggestion "new communication" is more apt than my use of 'new medium.' But I've used 'medium' because what most people today call 'new media' isn't the medium but the transport.

But, hey, try this for a concise version: New-media isn't whether it's electronic or digital, but that it no longer limits you to either getting the same package of content everyone else gets or else having to search by yourself for everything that you want.

Permalink to Comment

10. Carter Harkins on September 25, 2006 1:58 AM writes...

Thanks for taking the time to flesh out a workable definiton for a nebulous concept.

If user control of the New Medium is to be characterized simply by the addition of RSS feeds so that listeners can selectively aggregate the mass-media found online, then we have done nothing but reinvent the VCR in cyberspace. If RSS is used as nothing more than the online equivalent to a television remote or a newspaper subscription, then we have failed to realize the full potential of the New Medium, and in fact may have only extended the reach of the Mass Medium. If podcasting is nothing but a technology that provides everyone an equal voice in the Mass Medium, then we haven't entered the arena of the New Medium yet.

I've been disappointed in how online vehicles such as podcasting have only mirrored Mass Media communication methodologies. The podcast-as-podium paradigm has cheated podcasting of virtually all of its interactive potential. But technology is being innovated which will propel a new paradigm, by allowing contextually relevant comments (text,audio,video) to be added to the timeline of content such as podcasts and other web-consumed audio/video content, allowing many people to contribute to the final desired content.

In your opinion, is Interactivity (as defined by Steuer) a necessary hallmark of the New Medium as well?

Carter Harkins
Innertoob.com
Intrascopic Media Inc.

Permalink to Comment

11. Michael Zheng on February 1, 2007 7:42 AM writes...

新媒体就是能对大众同时提供个性化的内容的媒体，是传播者和接受者融会成无差异的对等的交流者、而无数的交流者相互间可以同时进行个性化交流的媒体。后者就是《连线》所谓所有人对所有人的传播。

Permalink to Comment

12. 水泥 on April 12, 2007 7:37 AM writes...

Publisher and broadcasters who don't make full use of the New

Medium will likely be left behind and wither during this new century.

Permalink to Comment

13. Miiranda on May 16, 2007 8:55 AM writes...

why are people giving comments when they dont know what you are talking about? Im a recently graduated university student, majoring in media studies, and there is a very distinct difference between media, new media and mass media, so Vin has wasted no time in defining the difference between the three, which IS necessary for people to understand.
Anon, Rick, maybe you just cant see the point because it seems too simple...but Vin, you should fix some of those spelling/grammer mistakes in order to validate your essay.

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14. Ginger on June 12, 2007 4:59 AM writes...

Hi Vin,
I was searching the internet to help me better define my line of business as a journalist. I have long contemplated saying that I specialize in "Social / Institutional Communications using New Media" but as you rightly pointed out, I too erred in my understanding of the term "New Media".

Thank you for this thought-provoking article. With your permission, I am going to send it to some friends who precisely teach "Social / Institutional Communications".

Ciao, ciao!
Ginger

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15. 干燥箱 on June 25, 2007 10:06 AM writes...

这文章太棒了。

Permalink to Comment

16. Vin Crosbie on June 26, 2007 8:24 PM writes...

干燥箱 and Michael Zheng:

谢谢!

Vin Crosbie

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17. namrata on July 20, 2007 5:56 AM writes...

i got what i wanted

thanks
excellent

Permalink to Comment

18. awflasher on July 22, 2007 11:54 AM writes...

Very very greate post!

I will read it very slowly :)

Permalink to Comment

19. Single on August 8, 2007 9:52 PM writes...

thanks a lot,that's what my topic needs.

great post

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20. Hassen Zriba on August 20, 2007 8:02 AM writes...

I just want to say that the article is pioneer in showing the structural and historical affinities between what is referred to as "new media" and the traditional types of media. Thank you very much for this intellectually fertile article.

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21. me on September 9, 2007 9:36 AM writes...

It is such a great post; i found what i want

Good work,

Permalink to Comment

22. Anthony on October 21, 2007 12:50 AM writes...

I am currently writing a book chapter on sport and new media and appreciate your elegant analogy to help define what's new in new media. I would like to cite your analogy and was wondering if you have published these thoughts in any traditional publications or will I have to cite this web based article.

Cheers

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23. Paul on November 14, 2007 1:42 AM writes...

The difficulty of many to many capabilities when hosted by an institution, especially a business institution, is that they lose control. In a one to many relationship there is control of message. In new media the well-formed message that works to the favor of the sponsoring institution can be turned against the originator. When broadcast copywritten material is posted on Utube by many communicators the loss of control by the originating institution is potential revenue loss. When politician carefully parse their words to institutional news reporters, they are crafting a message that they hope will hit viewers, listeners and readers in its purity. When bloggers take those messages, dissect them, receive feedback either confirming or decrying their point of view, and those perspectives become public record, the politicians careful parsing becomes the foundation of something they wish had never happened.

Traditional companies like broadcaster, publishers, movie producers and other original content creators, may not be most perplexed by a lack of understanding. Their stunned stance may be a frustration and deeply felt need to resize control of their intellectual products.

As such,the puzzlement of New Media is, how do we maintain traditional institutional values and interests? The Many to Many relationships are very conducive to traditional institutional breakdown and rapid development of new institutions that themselves are vulnerable as a function of the many to much communication that originally bore them. This topic is perhaps more an issue of social evolution. The lack of understanding may come from a movement away from central trends of change in favor of non directed avalanches of change. The loss of control and diffusion influence may be the most salient aspect of new media.

Permalink to Comment

24. YINKA AGBEDE on January 10, 2008 6:41 AM writes...

GOOD JOB, AN EYE-OPENER.

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25. Bob on January 17, 2008 12:04 PM writes...

I don't think the problem is the article's length but instead its logic. First, Crosbie claims that going back to old meanings, prior to the existence of a technology, is Better than claiming that a term's meaning can be extended as new developments emerge (e.g., calling einsteinium an element or baseball a game). No reason is given, and I can't see why we should change from the extension of "intermediary" that was made in the 1850s and seems natural to us now. Second, the article gives no proof for its account of "previous meanings". Crosbie never quotes any source before the 1800s saying, e.g., "I used the medium of water to get to town." Even less is any example given of a pre-1800 author saying "I used the interpersonal medium" or "the one-to-one medium". I can't remember any early source, even Hegel, saying such things, but even if some sources did, without proof the author's claim to be "returning to the previous meanings" is unproven and unpersuasive. Third, Crosbie ignores other communicative arrangements, long in existence, such as 'one to a few' communication--group communication--where some specific tailoring and some joint power to add content is present. See Goffman's work for other communicative arrangements [my term for what Crosbie calls 'media'.] So there weren't just two "media" before. Fourth, it's silly to claim that most instances of New Media individualize messages. Wikipedia, podcasts, websites don't, and those are pretty prototypical of New Media "vehicles". [Of course, to argue about the definitions usefully, we need a list of prototypical new media/"vehicles" or some other grounding. Since Crosbie's case is historically ungrounded, his argument otherwise amounts to 'I like my definitions best.'] Indeed, it may be self-contradictory to say that new media are "many-to-MANY" (my emphasis) AND that content is individualized. Fifth, it is even more strikingly faulty to claim that new media have, as a "hallmark characteristic", the property that "Each of the people involved --whether publisher, broadcasters, or consumer -- shares equal and reciprocal control over that content." Except for wikis (and even there limits exist), I can't think of a single example. In many cases many people have the ability to ADD content, as I'm doing now, but that's very different from "equal and reciprocal control". In most cases even the ability to add content meaningfully is limited and under unequal control. Thus, I think Crosbie's argument for his definitions is flawed in enough ways to be fatally flawed overall.

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26. Rachel on January 26, 2008 7:16 PM writes...

Good grief man, make your point.

Whatever you decided "new media" meant by the end of your article (sorry...I had to decide--"have a life" or "read article"), can we also insert in the definition "remarkable for facilitating communication promoting clarity of thought, succinctness, useful information as opposed to just data, the ability to enlighten (key root='light') and not bludgeon"?

If nothing else, all these new opportunities to communicate one-to-many or many-to-many should provoke an evolutionary bump up in writers' DNA that leads them to take a point, make it, leave something of value behind, and move on.

Permalink to Comment

27. trupti on July 14, 2009 11:27 PM writes...

Sir,
this article is the best. I translated the article in Marathi[my mother tongue] & taught my student What is media? How to define New Media?

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