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MA Motion Graphics

“Understanding the Message of Understanding Media” -

Lance State

review

What is the author’s main argument?

The main argument in the text is a support of Marshall McLuhan’s book “Understanding Media” and his idea that the way in which we receive information affects how we might understand or interpret it. The text supports McLuhans view and also expands on it. The text also explains the relationships of different media to each other; how the content of a medium is always a medium in it’s own right, how we can have no content without a medium but can have a medium without content, and how dated mediums can become stylistic content in newer mediums (like digital handwriting fonts or the abundance of faux analogue photography filters on mobile devices), this is called remediation. Ultimately the author argues that the book is more about the various processes of mediation rather than individual mediums and really is about the process of change that results from human activity.

How does the author’s argument relate to your practice/
discipline? Give examples where appropriate.

This text seems like it could be applied to the field of motion graphics in a myriad of ways. One point made is that transport based models of information networks overlook the asymmetrical relationship of media and content (Shannon-Weaver is the example given, another would be Paul Barans network models for Arpanet), This is a clear example of how infographics can include or exclude data that may be relevant to the person viewing. We have to be careful as designers to deliver information in a way that highlights the important information rather than making it impenetrable or giving the spotlight to information that is less important or irrelevant to the project.

Another thing important to consider is the 'overheating' of media, whereby too much content is needed for a medium (say a TV channel) and the quality drops to a point where it can reflect poorly on the medium, think of daytime television, or clickbait on youtube. Releasing content into a medium that has become overheated can reflect negatively on your work if people are, for example, publishing animated political videos on Facebook may be pointless as the website is synonymous with misinformation.

How could you develop some of the authors ideas through
your own design/research?

I think a good way to test and develop the ideas in the paper would be to release a project with the same content in several distinct mediums with some mechanism for feedback. This way you could have a survey of opinion where the main variable is the context or medium in which people received the content.