

July 4, 2012

Marshall McLuhan's Realm

Marshall McLuhan established that the notion “the medium is the message” simply changes the perception that society has with itself. To support this idea, Mark Federman attempts to support the ideas of McLuhan by describing “McLuhan meant what he said; unfortunately, his meaning is not at all obvious, and that is where we begin our journey to understanding” (Federman, 1). In essence, the message and medium are not taking their conventional meaning when McLuhan uses those terms. Yet simply stated, the medium is a metaphorical vessel that communicates, or holds, the message. The thought does not change based on different mediums, but the context does. The interpretation and speed of understanding that thought, in fact, is the primary difference. A car, a plane, and a boat, all carry people. The people do not change when they arrive at a destination simply because they took a different mode of communication, but the time it takes for them to travel, and the manner the world views their travel does change. Marshall McLuhan's ideas are grappled with either directly or indirectly in each of the following works: “The Invention of Printing,” “The Greek Legacy,” and “Dream Worlds of Consumption,” written, respectively, by Lewis Mumford, Eric Havelock, and Rosalynd Williams.

Lewis Mumford states boldly on page 77 of “The Invention of Printing” a primary idea supporting the claim of McLuhan describing that “Time and space were no longer barriers between men.” Mumford has a literary style that resembles a more descriptive language when compared to other writers in the media discipline. But, he states a fact

which focuses on the nature and development of the printing press; inherently, this shows the impact the printing press made on society and culture. The vessel holding information changed, and thus the perception of that information changed.

In “The Greek Legacy,” Eric Havelock finds that the alphabet had a fundamental changing influence on society, similar to that of other mediums. McLuhan’s finding is evermore present with the alphabet based on the description that Havelock uses. “[The Alphabet] democratized literacy, or rather made democratization possible” (Havelock, 38). Placing the alphabet in historical context, it eliminated scribes and the traditions of the ancient world, and it shaped the manner in which information was transferred. The vessels used to communicate information changed; indeed, the number of options increased in parallel.

Rosalynd Williams takes a fundamental separate approach in “Dream Worlds of Consumption.” Finding that a variety of separate technologies developed the industrialization of media in the 18th and 19th centuries, Williams notices a trend in France. The “dominate tone of these expositions was to celebrate “scientific knowledge and technical innovation” (Williams, 137). In summary, Williams describes the notion of mass consumption. No more haggling, and with that no more dreams, but instead living dreams through browsing and purchasing.

Marshall McLuhan, supported by Federman and others, has a valued notion. The medium, the vessel for communication, and the message, the actual thought, is a worthy perception.

Facebook v. Greek Alphabet

Both Facebook and the Greek Alphabet are two systems that have dramatically impacted the notion of democracy. Democratization improved by allowing more members of society to (1) not only contribute, but also (2) these people can communicate with one another. The Greek Alphabet eliminated the need for scribes, to some degree, allowing for the influx of writers. Facebook, using the internet as a foundation, reduced the need for more primitive concepts of communications, and also created the notion of a profile. Both fundamentally allowed for identity creation, and arguably ownership of that identity.

Computer v. Printed Books

After information is printed from a printing press, it is put on paper. This paper can either be published into a book or stored digitally. A digital book is a type of computer. Computers and printed books are both storage devices. Actually, a computer can simply be seen as an interactive or digital book seen in the right light. The social impact is clear, along with other economic or historical ramifications. Computers and books allowed for storage of vast amounts of information.

Newspapers v. Clay Tokens

The social benefits of each technology shadow the economic benefits. Both allow for communication to a greater degree, but the value of communication improved the means for economic relevance. Newspapers created a national market in the United States. Clay tokens set the stage for currency. In both regards, economic exchange

improved drastically. Finally, the level of communication between the two would later be improved upon by future developments. The internet solidified globalization of economic markets, and the usage of a legal tender formed currency as storage of value.

References

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