

Media by Srinath Karat

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Introduction

From speech to Internet videoconferencing, humans have always found ways to communicate. Nowadays, the media—a catchall term that encompasses the various ways in which entities communicate with others—isn't just a convenience, it's practically a necessity. It is almost impossible to travel anywhere, for example, without knowing how to read; and it could be very difficult to constantly keep in touch with faraway friends and family without telephones or the Internet.

But the obvious conveniences of media also come with potential drawbacks. Mass media outlets can efficiently communicate information to large groups of people, but can also mislead the public by conveying certain perspectives while omitting others. Personal media tools, such as blogging, can counteract this by allowing individuals to broadcast their opinions, but this could also result in the dissemination of unreliable information.

Fundamentally, media is a tool and its uses are a reflection of the people who use it. So understanding the media itself and its dynamics will help in using it and in mitigating its downsides. The media is here to stay, so it's not like there's much of a choice, anyway.

This issue brief will address what the media is and how it interacts with society—specifically, the types of media, the media's role in society, governmental roles in media, control of media, alternative media, the economics of the media industry, and a case study on a pivotal moment in history involving the media and its implications.

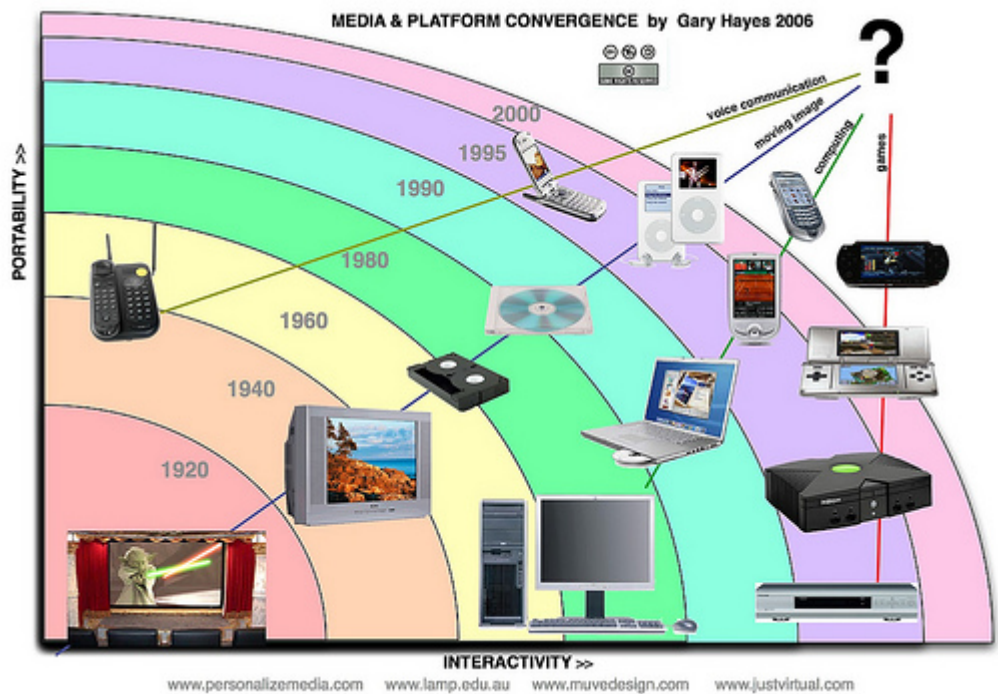
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Types of Media

Mass Media vs Personal Media

Personal media is any form of media designed for use by a specific person, in contrast to mass media, which is any form of media designed for use by large sets of people. Personal media can also denote person-to-person communications, such as speech, gestures, mail, and telephony.

The earliest forms of personal media, speech and gestures, had the benefit of being easy-to-use and not needing technology. But the downside of not being able to communicate to large audiences led to the development of mass media, such as writing.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/garyhayes/3252497296/>

New technologies can lead to new types of media and the ability to use a given form of media is related to the ability to use its related technology. For example, modern humans have used a technology, writing, to enhance speech. But writing was once the exclusive domain of scribes—professional hand-writers—and that monopoly only really ended after the advent of another technology, printing. While it then became easier for many people to learn to read—auto-didactically or via institutions—the ability to *write* was not wide-spread until the industrial revolution, when paper and writing utensils became affordable and widely-available.

Today, technology is further universalizing the ability to produce media. Printing, radio and television are some examples of mass media in that they are intended to reach vast audiences. But these forms of media previously could not be used by the average person. The advent of personal media technologies like blogging, podcasting and Internet video allowed the average person to do what was theretofore restricted to media companies.

But the ability to use communications technology is now so unrestricted that even the line between these definitions is becoming blurred. For example, *The New York Times* has a channel¹ on YouTube, one of the

¹ <http://www.youtube.com/user/TheNewYorkTimes>

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world's most popular² websites which allows anyone to upload videos. Likewise, Current TV³ is an American 24-hour television network based on viewer-created content. In China, the most popular website is Baidu, a Chinese language portal that offers a plethora of services such as searching, multimedia content and social networking.

List some ways in which you notice a mixing of mass media and personal media. In what ways are these examples allowing multiple perspectives to be shared? What are some benefits and drawbacks of this? How can consumers of media—both mass and personal—ensure that the information they get is derived from trusted sources?

For More Information:

Professor Shigeru Miyagawa on mass media and personal media

Shigeru Miyagawa, professor of linguistics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, discusses both mass and personal media in a very clear and concise way:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7bkHu27P5o>

Evolution of YouTube could mark the beginning of age of personal media

The following article explores the early stages of the personal media age, describing the change from monolithic media sources “firing” news and entertainment in one direction to a situation in which the flows occur in multiple directions:

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/kevinmaney/2006-06-13-youtube_x.htm

iPod era of personal media choices may be turning us into an iSolation nation

The following article examines potential pitfalls of excessive personal media use, such as the tendency to only expose oneself to ideas with which one is already comfortable and the resulting social isolation:

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/0912customize0912.html>

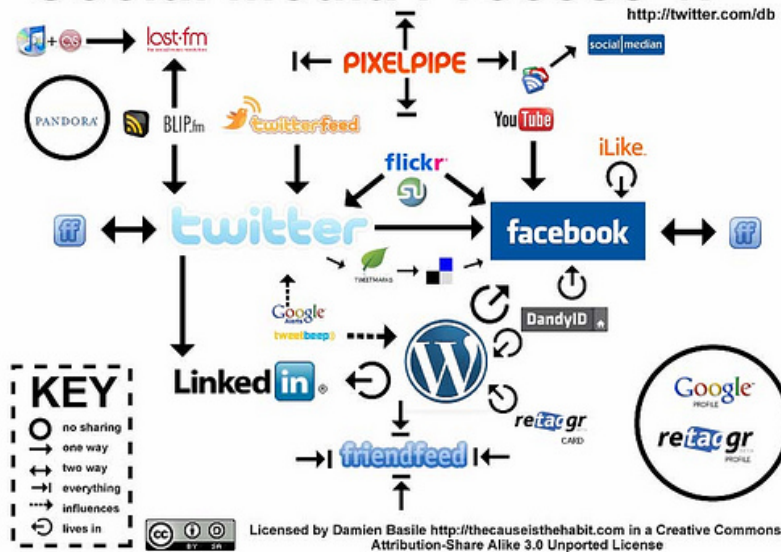
² <http://www.alex.com/siteinfo/youtube.com>

³ <http://current.com>

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Web 2.0

Social Media Process v. 1.0



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/damienbasile/3629544077/>

The term “Web 2.0” refers to a general trend of interactivity between users and a website. Examples include social networking sites, video-sharing sites, wikis, and blogs.

Web 2.0 sites typically include an acronym coined by professor Andrew McAfee, SLATES: searching (the ability to find information via keywords), links (commands that join disparate pages together), authoring (the ability to create content), tags (short descriptions of content that categorize and facilitate searches), extensions (applications), and signals (syndication technology that notifies users of content changes).

To learn more about Web2.0, click here. http://www.globalization101.org/issue_sub/technology/webtech/web2.0

The Role of Media in Society

Most social scientists define our current society as a mass society and believe it was formed at the end of the 19th century mainly by industrialization, urbanization and modernization.⁴ The media's role in this society is fundamentally a function of how this society chooses to use the media. Furthermore, the media's relationship with this society is both reflexive—the mass media simultaneously affects and is affected by mass society—and varied.

The following pages highlight four examples of important roles the media has in society.

Self-Regulation: How the Media Watches Itself

A free media is by definition decentralized. While lacking a central authority that pre-approves content and still needing to rectifying mistakes—omissions or distortions—a free media resolves this paradox by acting as a self-regulator. Specifically, media content *itself* can be analyzed by others within the media, leaving the final judgment up to the viewers. Self-regulation is important because anyone in the media is capable of conveying bias; in lieu of restricting content, a free media would be capable of “policing” itself.

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart – Thursday, March 12, 2009

The Daily Show with Jon Stewart is a parody news program that makes its mark by satirizing contemporary political issues, cultural fads and the media itself. One famous instance of the latter was the March 12, 2009 episode featuring guest Jim Cramer, the host of the CNBC show *Mad Money*. During the episode, the global financial and economic crisis of 2007-2009 was in full effect, and Jon Stewart—eponymous host of the show—claimed that CNBC shirked its public responsibility by simply relaying information fed to it by corporations as opposed to being more investigative:

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/full-episodes/220533/thu-march-12-2009-jim-cramer>

Entertainment: 20/20 “Simpsons” – Friday, March 8, 2002

What's entertaining to one person can be boring to another, offensive to still another. Entertainment can alleviate boredom and relieve stress. It can also serve as a reflection of society.

On Friday evening, March 8, 2002, the American television news-magazine *20/20* did an expose on *The Simpsons*, the animated television sitcom and one of the most popular series of all time. A *20/20* reporter asked one of the show's creators, George Meyer, “Is there a purpose to *The Simpsons*?”⁵ Replied Meyer, “*If there is,*

4 Wells, Alan and Hakanen, Ernest A. Mass Media and Society. p. 3

5 Turner, Chris. Planet Simpson: How a Cartoon Masterpiece Defined a Generation. p. 410

it's to get people to re-examine their world, and specifically the authority figures in their world."⁶ Eventually, the show went to a commercial break with a teaser.

What role has *The Simpsons* played other than that of entertainment? What role has the show played as a purveyor of American culture throughout the world? Do you think this is mostly positive or negative? Do you think that the show will still be "entertaining" in the future? Provide examples of older entertainment that still has mass appeal today.

Politics: Republic of Indonesia

The media plays an important role in politics. It can keep the powerful in check by making their actions transparent. It also enables the powerful to get a general sense of the zeitgeist, public opinion.

Indonesia is a populous, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual island nation with an important economy. The republic's transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic one makes it an excellent case study for the media's role in politics.



<http://www.indonesiamatters.com/86/indonesian-provinces-map/>

In Indonesia, the "New Order" was the authoritarian form of government through which Suharto ruled Indonesia from 1966 when he replaced Sukarno as leader until 1998. In an attempt to establish order, "the New Order effectively barred political activism and even political debates."⁷ Under the pretext of combating communism, the new government killed half a million people and imprisoned another half a million.⁸ "That this myth was repeated in the media is well-known. What is more interesting... is that the story was not believed by large sections of the Indonesian population."⁹

6 Ibid.

7 Sen, Krishna and Hill, David T. *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. p. 3

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. p. 4

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In order to maintain control in the face of riots, Suharto weakened the bases of liberal influence—universities, the civil service and *the press*.¹⁰ Suharto then relied on strong economic growth and increasing integration with the world economy to enhance his grip.¹¹ Eventually—starting in the mid-1980s—international oil prices did drop,¹² but by then Suharto's grip was firm.¹³

After the recovery, the economy was more deregulated and diversified, but the Asian financial crisis of 1997 wiped out years of growth.¹⁴ With communism no longer a threat, it became increasingly difficult for the regime to maintain such strict control over the media and a period of *keterbukaan*—or openness—permeated the nation.¹⁵ Then, in June 1994, three popular news magazines were banned; unlike previous riots and demonstrations, sustained and organized criticism—including, but not limited to, legal challenges and middle class protests—was aimed at the government.¹⁶

What advantages would a government have from controlling the press? Disadvantages? If you were opposed to a government and that government prevented you from using the media to convey your opinions, what would you do? What risks could this involve?

Seth Pinsky, President and CEO of NYC Economic Development Corporation, discusses how media can be used to promote democracy.

<http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

Education: Public Broadcasting Service

Schools are not the only institutions capable of providing educational services. People use the media both to teach and to learn since media services can often be more efficient and direct in reaching people.

What other benefits are associated with media-based education? Drawbacks?

The Public Broadcasting Service, founded in 1969, is an American non-profit public broadcasting television service with member stations which hold collective ownership.¹⁷ PBS averaged a 1.2 primetime rating during 2007-2008, larger than many of the commercial channels frequently cited as competitors, including HBO (0.8), History Channel (0.8), Discovery Channel (0.7), CNN (0.7), The Learning Channel (0.6), and Bravo (0.5).¹⁸

Public broadcasting's independence from advertising revenue makes it less susceptible to the mass market. Therefore, it can focus on issues—such as news or education—in a more in-depth way without worrying as

10 Ibid. p. 5

11 Ibid.

12 http://www.wtrg.com/oil_graphs/oilprice1947.gif

13 Sen, Krishna and Hill, David T. *Media, Culture and Politics in Indonesia*. p. 5

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid. p. 6

16 Ibid.

17 About PBS. PBS. <http://www.pbs.org/aboutpbs/>

18 PBS: An Overview. PBS. http://www.pbs.org/aboutpbs/aboutpbs_corp.html

much about ratings. Detractors say, however, that this makes it less responsive to what the public actually wants.

Critics of public broadcasting also say that it can too easily impose agendas on the public. Defenders point out, however, that commercial broadcasting can convey biases as well.

Lastly, public broadcasting's reliance on public funds irks critics who say that entities that cannot fiscally survive on their own should not receive public funds. Defenders believe that public broadcasting's benefits are well-worth the public cost.

One of the most acclaimed programs on PBS is *Sesame Street*, a popular educational children's television series. Created in America, the show has spawned numerous international spinoffs. The series is well-known for its use of Muppets, a type of puppet, in combining education and entertainment in clear and accessible way. Educational goals for the program include basic letter and word recognition, basic arithmetic and geometry, problem-solving, basic life skills, exploration of emotions, socialization, and ways of handling real-world situations.

Sesame Street is often showed in classrooms. The show also has its own website:

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/home>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/johnmcnab/4243752557/>

How has the Internet complemented the television program *Sesame Street*?

The Regulation, Deregulation and Ownership of Media

Society understands, and therefore seeks to check, the media's collective power. But each member of society will have different opinions about the methods by which, and the extent to which, the media is controlled. Therefore, there will always be ongoing debates about regulation and deregulation.

Regulators have typically approached media from a segmented perspective, with separate regulatory entities for separate producers—such as content providers or technological services. In the United States, the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) is a voluntary and widely-used system that rates films released by distributors. Films shown on television, however, use the TV Parental Guidelines system, a voluntary system backed by the Federal Communications Commission.

Recently, however, the media industry is seeing a trend toward convergence—multiple or bundled packages of services, such as telephone, Internet and television, provided to a market using shared infrastructure, such as fiber optics.¹⁹

What do you think this will mean for separate regulatory agencies? Should they come together or remain separate?

As a result of convergence, content that would normally be “broadcast” can now be sent through a plethora of systems—such as the Internet or mobile phones—instead of just airwaves. For instance, while a show would be expected to follow certain decency guidelines, broadcast regulators only had authority to manage broadcasts—as opposed to say DVDs—of that show. So although the motivations behind regulation might not have changed, it may now be more difficult to achieve the corresponding goals.

Court Tosses FCC 'wardrobe Malfunction' fine

During Super Bowl XXXVIII's halftime show, Janet Jackson and Justin Timberlake performed together. As an end to the duet, Timberlake, on live television, ripped part of Jackson's bustier, exposing her right breast. Jackson's nipple was covered by a gold, star-shaped covering, but the FCC deemed it indecent and attempted to levy a fine. The US Third Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadelphia tossed out the fine, although the Supreme Court has recently remanded²⁰ the case back to the Third Circuit for reconsideration.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPtbHc02mYk>

Also, non-traditional agents have entered the market, further complicating the situation since these agents don't neatly fall into previous regulatory categories. For instance, there is no search engine regulatory authority in the United States, although American firms such as Google often restrict their services in China due to that nation's laws. (Google *is* of course bound by the same US laws as any other company. For instance, there has been talk of Google becoming a monopoly, subjecting it to anti-trust laws.²¹)

Ask the Experts: Author David Vise on his book The Google Story

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=4954796503667252207#>

19 Locksley, Gareth. The Media and Development: What's the Story?. p. 19

20 Stout, David. “Lower Court Told to Revisit Ruling in Super Bowl Show.” The New York Times, 4 May 2009

21 Auletta, Ken. “The Search Party: Google squares off with its Capitol Hill critics.” The New Yorker, 14 January 2008

Regulation

Nations vary in the degree and scope to which they regulate the media. In Europe, regulation is centered around media ownership, less so around content. In the People's Republic of China, content deemed inappropriate by the government is regulated by a slew of agencies.

Some regions of the world are already or are becoming more regulated:

- In the European Union, lawmakers are poised to create a telecommunications regulator called the Body of European Regulators of Electronic Communications.²² Currently, some European states ignore or defy EU telecommunications law if doing so would harm their national telephone monopolies, some of which are still under total or partial control and ownership of the state.²³ For example, Germany is allowing Deutsche Telekom—32 percent of which is still owned by the national government—to bar competitors from using its super-high-speed VDSL broadband network.²⁴ Although illegal, cases such as these could take too long to resolve before the European Court of Justice; the new EU regulator, would, in theory, be quicker in resolving disputes, allowing decisions to have a more rapid effect on markets.²⁵ Additionally, the regulator would harmonize member nations' rules and practices on pricing and network access.²⁶
- In the People's Republic of China, policy changes by the government in the late 1970s had a widespread and profound effect on most aspects of Chinese society, including the media. The period of 1980-1999 saw the deregulation of media content and a decrease in subsidies of media industries.²⁷ Before deregulation and the ending of subsidies, the government issued content guidelines which media agencies would follow. After deregulation and the ending of subsidies, media agencies have greater freedoms in creating content, although subjects deemed taboo by the government are still heavily regulated and sometimes even censored. However, the state still regulates²⁸ investment in media infrastructure, such as high-speed Internet networks, and generally exerts²⁹ much control over media content.

Google's Vint Cerf on the Future of Internet Regulation

Vint Cerf, known as one of the “fathers” of the Internet and current Google executive, spoke to Informilo about the future of Internet regulation:

<http://www.informilo.com/20090302/googles-vint-cerf-future-internet-regulation-86>

22 O'Brien, Kevin J. “E.U. Poised to Establish Telecommunications Regulator.” The New York Times, 30 March 2009

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Donald, Stephanie Hemelryk and Michael Keane. “Media in China: New Convergences, New Approaches.” Media in China: Consumption, Content and Crisis. p. 6

28 Ibid.

29 “Google Sensors itself for China.” BBC News. January 25, 2006. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/4645596.stm>

Deregulation

Other areas of the world are seeing a decrease in regulation. In the United States, Congress significantly altered the regulation of media with the **Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996**.^{30 31} Previously, various telecommunications agents had defined realms—telephony, radio, et. al. Local and long distance companies were not allowed to compete against each other while cable companies had **monopoly** (an economic situation in which one firm supplies the entire market) status.³² Conversely, the 1996 statute allowed local and long distance providers to compete with each other.³³ It also allowed cable companies to offer local service while allowing television and radio broadcasters to own more stations.³⁴

Further deregulation was attempted in June 2003 when the **FCC** approved new rules^{35 36} that would have removed or loosened limits on ownership of media within a given market. However, that decision was overturned³⁷ and stands^{38 39}.

Ownership

Private media ownership has both positive and negative qualities.

Private media ownership can result in better quality products due to competition. The threat of losing market share to a competitor forces firms to put forth their best products. Furthermore, large media firms achieve efficiencies due to **economies of scale**. (In microeconomics, a situation in which a producer's cost per unit of a product falls as more of that product is produced.) Lastly, the very fact that these firms are not owned by governments allows perspectives that dissent from official sources to be shared.

On the other hand, private ownership leads to media firms placing profit above public interest. It can also lead to cultural decay in that popular media can become homogenized:

In Kellner we observe a claim for the spread of a global culture, usually American in origin underpinned by a notion of a media powerful enough to shape our self-identities and our views of the world. According to a number of media and cultural critics, this "global culture"--with the hallmarks of homogenization and convergence--is obliterating local cultures, creating in its wake mirrors of American consumer society. Thus media theorist Cees Hamelink believes that "the impressive variety of the world's cultural systems is waning due to a process of 'cultural synchronization' that is without historic

30 Telecommunications Act of 1996. Federal Communications Commission. <http://www.fcc.gov/telecom.html>

31 Other significant US federal telecommunications laws are Radio Act of 1927, Communications Act of 1934, Cable Communications Policy Act of 1984, and Cable Television Consumer Protection and Competition Act of 1992.

32 Wasserstein, Bruce. *Big Deal: Mergers and Acquisitions in the Digital Age*. p. 13

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Merging Media. Online News Hour. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/media/conglomeration/fcc2.html>

36 Finberg, Howard. "Enter the Matrix: The FCC's New Rules." Poynter Online.

<http://www.poynter.org/column.asp?id=56&aid=36005>

37 see: Prometheus Radio Project vs. FCC in the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit

38 Ahrens, Frank. "FCC Drops Bid to Relax Media Rules." *Washington Post*. 28 January 2005: A01

39 Labaton, Stephen. "U.S. Backs Off Relaxing Rules for Big Media." *The New York Times*. 28 January 2005

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precedent.⁴⁰

Furthermore, private ownership often results in industry concentration—especially if there is a dearth of regulation—which in turn leads to the stifling of alternative points of view. For instance, in 2002 the Canadian Association of Journalists (CAJ) and the Quebec Federation of Professional Journalists accused CanWest Global Communications, Canada's largest media firm, of “a disturbing pattern of censorship and repression of dissenting views.”⁴¹ CAJ vice president called for “the elected officials of this country to be looking at what the repercussions [of media concentration] are for the general public.”⁴² As a remedy, the Newspaper Guild of Canada stated that the media giant should respect the editorial autonomy of its papers and columnists—a reference to the firm's purchases of other newspapers.⁴³

Conflicts of Interest

Another one of the most ominous problems is that owners of media firms can experience conflicts of interest. Major American news firms regularly experience political conflicts of interest. According to FAIR, an American media watch group:

Top news executives and celebrity reporters frequently socialize with government officials. The most powerful media companies routinely make large contributions to both major political parties, while receiving millions of dollars in return in the form of payments for running political ads... In this incestuous culture, 'news' is defined chiefly as the actions and statements of people in power. Reporters, dependent on 'access' and leaks provided by official sources, are too often unwilling to risk alienating these sources with truly critical coverage. Nor are corporate media outlets interested in angering the elected and bureaucratic officials who have the power to regulate their businesses.⁴⁴

Major media firms also experience conflicts of interest with respect to business: “Media corporations share members of the board of directors with a variety of other large corporations, including banks, investment companies, oil companies, health care and pharmaceutical companies and technology companies.”⁴⁵

Also, media firms can experience conflicts of interest with respect to ideology: “[The] Brownsville, Texas PBS affiliate KMBH, owned by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brownsville, claimed that they didn't air the Frontline documentary *Hand of God* because PBS failed to provide the video feed in time (Valley Morning Star, 1/18/07). Critics suspected the station's actual reason had to do with the documentary's subject matter: Catholic priest molestation scandals.”⁴⁶

40 Strelitz, Larry. “Where the Global Meets the Local: Media Studies and the Myth of Cultural Homogenization.” *TBS: No. 6*. Spring/Summer 2001.

41 Winter, James. “Canada's Media Monopoly.” *Fair and Accuracy in Reporting*. May/June 2002.

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=1106>

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 “Issue Area: Official Agendas.” *Fair and Accuracy in Reporting*.

http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=7&issue_area_id=36

45 “Interlocking Directorates.” *Fair and Accuracy in Reporting*. <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2870>

46 Jackson, Janine and Peter Hart. “Fear & Favor 2007.” *Fair and Accuracy in Reporting*. March/April 2008 <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3323>

Net Neutrality

Many Internet consumers get their service from a company, known as a network provider. Network providers can potentially exert a high degree of control over the Internet used by the consumer. **Net neutrality** is a proposed principle fundamentally advocating that interactions over the Internet should be between end-users—consumers and websites, for example—and not involve “middle men”—like network providers.⁴⁷

Arguments for net neutrality include:

- freedom of speech: the Internet is at its core a free and open technology
- rights over data control: network providers have no rights over data between end-users
- conflicts of interest for network providers: the temptation for network providers to restrict information from competitors will be too great
- stifling of innovation: the involvement of network providers in determining what content, like sites, reaches consumers will create a misleading picture of what consumers really want; the success of sites will be determined by deal-making, not the site itself
- preservation of Internet standards: allowing network providers the ability to restrict content will force content in general to change, disrupting existing Internet standards
- the end-to-end/dumb network principle: network providers should simply be “dumb” networks that transmit information between end-users

Arguments against net neutrality include:

- complexity of technology: the whole issue is a technical issue best left to computer engineers and technicians
- innovation: prioritization of **bandwidth** is necessary for future innovations, as more important traffic would be given faster access
- investment: network providers invest billions in developing networks and need to recoup those outlays by charging for faster access
- existing inequality: well-funded sites already have an advantage in getting to the “doorstep” of network providers; they can’t expect the network provider to then automatically deliver these sites equally to consumers
- bandwidth availability: the proliferation of sites like YouTube already take up much bandwidth; in order to deal with future bandwidth requirements, companies need to charge high-bandwidth sites more in order to fund the building of future networks
- costs of net neutrality will be passed onto consumers: if companies cannot charge sites for fees, they’ll end up charging consumers instead
- regulation will have unforeseen consequences: regulation, especially for something as complex as the Internet, can often have unforeseen consequences

Some observers believe that the whole argument is overhyped, vague and misleading, and that neither side is “neutral” about net neutrality.⁴⁸

The debate over net neutrality is happening in many parts of the world as of now. In the United States, legal and political debates are ongoing; the FCC has claimed authority in the meantime. In the European Union, the European Commission is solidly behind the idea of net neutrality.⁴⁹ In the Russian Federation, network providers

47 Whitt, Rick. “Hey FCC, keep the Internet open -- and awesome!” Google Public Policy Blog. January 14, 2010.
<http://googlepublicpolicy.blogspot.com/search/label/Net%20Neutrality>

48 Birnbaum, Jeffrey H. “No Neutral Ground in This Internet Battle.” *Washington Post*. 26 June 2006

49 Reding, Viviane. “The Future of the Internet and Europe's Digital Agenda.” Lunch debate on the future of the Internet and Europe's digital strategy. Brussels, 6 October 2009.

can limit the actions of individual consumers if such actions threaten the normal functioning of the network. Japan is basically net neutral.⁵⁰ The People's Republic of China regulates Internet traffic based on content, although this is mainly for political reasons as opposed to economic ones.

An Hourglass Market Structure

At the demand level, the media industry is experiencing fragmentation in that consumers want more individualized content. For example, cable and satellite companies offer general channel “packages,” as well as specific channel packages—like ones completely devoted to movies or a specific sport—allowing consumers more choice in channel selection. Also, mobile phone services offer “a-la-carte” plans for calling, texting and data, giving consumers the ability to select plans that are right for them. (For example, a consumer might opt for an unlimited calling plan with 200 texts-per-month.)

As such, established companies both acquire similar assets—in order to preempt threats to their business models—and forge new partnerships—in order to cater to as many consumers as possible by establishing conglomerates. For example, Microsoft bought Hotmail in order to expand into a burgeoning e-mail market.

This all results in an “hourglass-shaped” media producer sector: “with a small number of large often global and conglomerate enterprises at one end and a very large number of local micro or small enterprises at the other with a very thin middle.”⁵¹



http://www.flickr.com/photos/jesse_menn/3164739580/

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/446&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

50 “Guideline for Packet Shaping.” Japan Internet Providers Association (JAIPA), Telecommunications Carriers Association (TCA), Telecom Services Association (TELESA), Japan Cable and Telecommunications Association, (JCTA). May 2008. http://www.jaipa.or.jp/other/bandwidth/guidelines_e.pdf

51 Locksley, Gareth. *The Media and Development: What's the Story?*. p. 21

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Alternative Media

The mainstream media is more concentrated than ever.⁵² This scenario allows for the juxtaposing of other—or *alternative*—information sources outside the mainstream media's purview. So at the most basic level, alternative media is any source of information that is neither widely produced nor consumed. In societies where media products freely flow, media that provides perspectives different from those usually expressed, serves communities not catered to by mass media or explicitly advocates social change meet this definition.⁵³

In societies where all non-sanctioned media is banned, what would be considered alternative media?

A Historical Overview of Alternative Media

The history of alternative media is as old as the media itself.⁵⁴ For every official or popular account of something, there almost always was a dissenting view.

In the West, Johann Gutenberg's printing press was seen to challenge the established system in that it provided the common person access to information—the Bible—previously only available to the clergy. The first newspapers in Europe empowered new business classes with information previously only available to the hereditary aristocracy.⁵⁵

In response to the often radical nature of alternative media, those already in power reacted by curbing the other information source's power in some way. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, English radical papers challenged the status quo on topics as diverse as religion to human rights. The government reacted via a variety of methods from taxing paper to requiring licenses to publish.⁵⁶

However this hurt *all* papers—including those written for elite audiences—and led to a counter-reaction pushing for freedom of the press. Eventually, this right was achieved—lowering operating costs—while advertisers who sought respectability and more affluent audiences thronged to elite papers—increasing revenue; coupled with tactics to appeal to a wider audience—such as gossip columns and crime reports—the previously elite papers essentially put the radical ones out of business. This new type of press led to the codification of news production in that it was completely done by professionals, as opposed to mostly amateurs with a few politically motivated professionals.⁵⁷

What role has technology played in alternative media historically? In the present?

52 Waltz, Mitzi. *Alternative and Activist Media*. Edinburgh University Press. 2005. p. 1

53 Ibid.. p. 2

54 Ibid. p. 12

55 Ibid. p. 13

56 Ibid. p. 14

57 Ibid.

Alternative Media in the Present Day

The present-day alternative media is generally defined by its opposition to the mainstream media. Some proponents of alternative media argue that governments and/or large corporations so heavily control the mainstream media, that the mainstream media is often used as a propaganda machine. Therefore, alternative forms of media view themselves as necessary to present viewpoints other than those from media sources controlled by governments or corporations.

The Internet is at the forefront of today's alternative media. It is easy and affordable to produce something over the Internet; combined with its relatively uncontrolled nature—even the most stringent government and/or corporate Internet controls can be worked around by those with computer expertise—and its ability to reach large groups of people simultaneously and easily, this makes online sources of alternative media extremely popular. Furthermore, the multimedia nature of the Internet allows for other forms of alternative media, such as the underground press, radio and television, to transmit via online sources, such as text documents, podcasts and videos, respectively.

Where Internet access is lacking, alternative forms of media can still be accessed. As mentioned above, underground press, radio and television are still used in the present day. (See “Here are more examples from across the globe” below.)

Expansion or Isolation?

The proliferation of alternative media is correlated with increasingly personalized content, or content that is designed specifically for a user or a certain type of user. While this has expanded the accessibility of the media as a whole, it has also led to greater individual isolation. While television services offer hundreds of channels and the Internet offers billions of websites, they also allow individuals to filter out content that does not coincide with their own views.⁵⁸ So rather than increasing communication between broad sections of society, alternative media could actually lead to social polarization instead.

What are some possible solutions for media isolation on the Internet? Do these solutions already exist?

A Few Examples of Alternative Media...

... from the American political left...

<http://www.democracynow.org>

<http://www.alternet.org>

<http://therealnews.com/t/>

... and the American political right.

<http://www.drudgereport.com>

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 21

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<http://townhall.com>

Here are more examples from across the globe:

<http://www.ourmedianetwork.org/wiki/map>

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The Business of Media

The business models of media are unique and diverse. The media industry is one of few that deals with intangible—or conceptual, non-material—goods. As such, there is no single method of operating in the media industry; each firm can operate on its own business model.

In the United States, the media is the only industry expressly protected by the nation's Constitution (First Amendment), due to its public interest role as a purveyor of free and creative expression, independent thought and diverse perspectives.⁵⁹ On the other hand, nearly all major media companies are commercial firms whose investors care about revenues, costs and profits.

Can both of these goals be achieved simultaneously or are they mutually exclusive? To what extent does achieving one goal result in the other?

Evaluating the Business of Media

There are many different ways to evaluate the media. Two of these perspectives are the market model and the public sphere model.

Market Model

The market model is the dominant perspective within the media industry.⁶⁰ It's similar to most economic measures of firm, namely in its emphasis of profit analysis. It's useful as media firms often act as typical companies, raising capital, competing with other media firms for market share and developing new products, with the results affecting investors, employees and audiences.

As such, the market model can explain why certain firms behave in certain ways at certain times and places. A firm that offers a product exactly identical to those of other firms within a given market cannot charge higher prices for that product than do the other firms, lest they repel customers within that market. For example, in the New York City metropolitan area, the telecom company Verizon is gaining customers from other companies by offering almost exactly the same channels as those other companies but at lower prices.

There are advantages to society if media firms operate as businesses, namely efficiency, responsiveness, flexibility, and innovation.⁶¹ One such example is CNN, which became the model for many other news networks.⁶² However, the market model can be limited. Society as a whole has an interest which transcends profits. Therefore, the market model can be complemented by the public sphere model.

Public Sphere Model

59 Croteau, David and Hoynes, William. The Business of Media. p. 1

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid. p. 18-19

62 <http://www.cnn.com>

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Since the market is based on consumer purchasing power, the market view can deviate from the democratic ideal of equal opportunity per person;⁶³ markets are undemocratic since those with wealth can have more influence within the model. Private media can also, at best, not hurt or, at worst, harm democracies as it makes more business sense to sometimes grab hold of consumers' attention by pandering or shocking them; with respect to social morality, markets simply meet demands, and usually have no concern for public welfare.

Therefore, profits cannot be the sole sign of a healthy media industry, and a slew of other public interest criteria, like diversity and substance, need to be used to assess its health. The limitations of the market model can be rectified by the public sphere model.

In the public sphere model, the media is evaluated by the extent to which the public interest is served. This model is very conceptual in that it is difficult to concretely analyze. But generally, the media is a public force: it is both vital to dynamic democracies and authoritarian control within totalitarian systems. The public sphere then meets social needs by providing a valuable resource to all regardless of the ability to pay. One such example is the United Kingdom's BBC, a publicly-supported broadcasting company.⁶⁴

Advertising

The media offers a service to consumers, such as entertainment or education. But it doesn't do this for nothing; so-called "free" media often causes consumers to incur a cost in the form of advertising. By showing advertisements, media sources grab consumers' attention for purposes such as increasing awareness about a product and/or providing producers access to consumers, while extracting fees from those product-makers and producers. The media industry is then unique in that it can act more as a broker than a supplier, bringing together advertisers and consumers.

For about the past 50 years, advertising has supported "free" media services, such as television and radio. Despite recent declines in advertising—US measured-media ad spending fell 4.1 percent in 2008 and plunged 14.3 percent in the first half of 2009.⁶⁵ U.S. advertising expenditures are starting to improve, with a 5.1 increase in the first quarter of 2010.⁶⁶ During this period of low advertising dollars, media sources with a diversity of revenue streams, such as subscriptions and fees, did better than those wholly or heavily reliant on advertising. The following graph shows U.S. measured-media spending for all advertisers in 2009.⁶⁷

63 Croteau, David and Hoynes, William. *The Business of Media*, p. 21-22

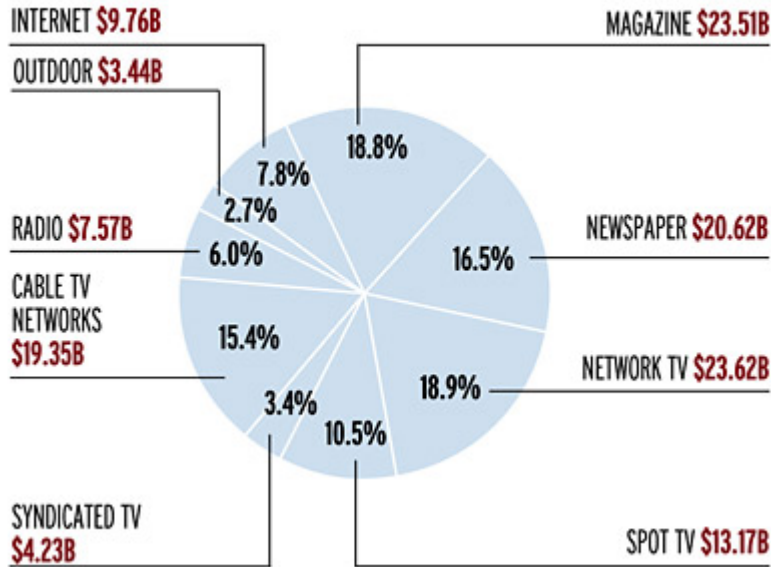
64 <http://www.pbs.org>

65 Johnson, Bradley. "U.S. Media Revenue Set for Historic 2009 Decline." MediaWorks. October 5, 2009. http://adage.com/mediaworks/article?article_id=139445

66 <http://www.kantarmediana.com/news/05262010.htm>

67 <http://printinthemix.com/fastfacts/show/350>

WHERE THE MONEY WENT 2009 measured-media spending: \$125.3 billion.



If you were in charge of advertising for a food company and wanted to advertise on a cable news network, would you be willing to advertise on that network if it ran a news story that claimed your product was unsafe?

Advertising products to consumers has taken new forms recently:

Advertorials. News stories or editorials can sometimes be subtle product advertisements.

Dan Brown appears on Good Morning America to discuss the "Da Vinci Code"
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ORH9P7bnjl>)

Advertainment. Some forms of entertainment aim to advertise a product.

Coca-Cola's "Open Happiness" Music Video
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cxfkg3RaRjs>)

Product placement. Some forms of entertainment that do not aim to advertise a product can nevertheless contain advertisements for products.

2008-2009 UEFA Champions League Final Highlights
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moNXqOPoueU&>)

Furthermore, the audience itself can become a product. According to Noam Chomsky, corporations sell

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audiences to other companies in that they grab the attention of a specific demography.⁶⁸ In this way, some forms of media allow consumers to “self-select” themselves for advertisers.

Martin Kon, Head of Media Practice at Oliver Wyman, highlights the importance of branding in the media. <http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

Marc Frons, Chief Technology Officer of The New York Times, discusses different advertising models for the digital era: <http://www.levininstitute.org/mediainnovation.cfm>.

68 Chomsky, Noam. What Makes Mainstream Media Mainstream. Z Magazine, June 1997.

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Trends in the Media Industry

The media industry as a whole has seen four broad developments.⁶⁹

Growth. Due to mergers and acquisitions, individual media firms are larger than ever.

Some of Viacom's brands—such as BET, MTV and Shockwave—are a good example of how media firms have become larger than ever.⁷⁰

Integration. The new media firms have integrated horizontally (by working in multiple forms of media), vertically (by working in multiple stages of production and distribution, or both).⁷¹

“Google’s AdWords created a new model by combining a media company—Google’s search results and its network of AdSense affiliate websites—with an advertising agency, i.e. advertisers buy ads directly from Google through its AdWords platform.”⁷²

Time Warner's operations in multiple forms of media—such as AOL Internet, HBO broadcasting and Time publishing—are examples of horizontal integration.⁷³

Globalization. Major media firms have become increasingly global in scope.

The Tokyo-based firm, Sony, has a motion picture production and development division, Sony Pictures Entertainment, which operates throughout the world.⁷⁴

Concentration. The ownership of mainstream media has become increasingly concentrated.

Free Press's⁷⁵ catalog of media concentration
(<http://www.freepress.net/ownership/chart/main>)

Martin Kon, Head of Media Practice at Oliver Wyman, provides an overview of the historical developments in media. <http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

Seth Pinsky, President and CEO of the New York City Economic Development shares his thoughts on the transition from traditional media to digital media <http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

What are some advantages and disadvantages—both economic and social—of media concentration?

69 Croteau, David and Hoynes, William. *The Business of Media*, p. 77

70 Viacom: Our Brands. <http://www.viacom.com/ourbrands/Pages/default.aspx>

71 Horizontal and vertical integration are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

72 Karp, Scott. “The New Vertically Integrated Media And Advertising Companies?” *Publishing2.0*. May 18, 2007.
<http://publishing2.com/2007/05/18/the-new-vertically-integrated-media-and-advertising-companies/>

73 Time Warner: Businesses. <http://www.timewarner.com/corp/businesses/index.html>

74 Sony Corporation of America: Outline of Principal Operations. <http://www.sony.com/SCA/outline/pictures.shtml>

75 Free Press is an American, non-profit organization that advocates media reform.

Timeline of Media Mega Mergers

Below is a summary of major media mergers and acquisitions that took place from the 1980's through 2004.⁷⁶ The rest of merger 2005-2011, are highlighted on the next pages.














<p>January 1986</p>	  <p>Capital Cities Communications Inc. buys American Broadcasting Co. (ABC) for \$3.5 billion. Capital Cities/ABC Inc. is created.</p>
<p>June 1986</p>	   <p>General Electric Co. purchases RCA Corp., parent company of National Broadcasting Co. (NBC) and NBC television network for \$6.4 billion. At this time, it was the largest non-oil acquisition in U.S. history.</p>
<p>November 1989</p>	  <p>Sony Corp. buys Columbia Pictures Entertainment Inc. for \$3.4 billion.</p>
<p>January 1990</p>	   <p>Warner Communications Inc. merges with Time Inc., creating Time Warner Inc. world's biggest media conglomerate (\$14.1 billion merger).</p>
<p>January 1991</p>	 <p>Matsushita Electric Industrial Co. of Japan purchase MCA Inc. for \$6.9 billion.</p>

⁷⁶ Media Mega Mergers. Common Cause. <http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dKLNK1MQIwG&b=4923181>
<http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dKLNK1MQIwG&b=4923181>

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<p>September 1993</p>	 <p>The New York Times Co. buys  The Boston Globe for \$1.1 billion. This was the biggest takeover in U.S. newspaper history.</p>  APF Publications Inc. Affiliated
<p>March 1994</p>	 <p>Viacom purchases  Blockbuster Video for \$8.4 billion</p>
<p>July 1994</p>	 <p>After winning a bidding war against QVC Inc., Viacom Inc. acquires  Paramount Communications Inc. for \$10 billion.</p>
<p>June 1995</p>	 <p>Seagram Co. (Canadian company) purchases  MCA Inc. from Matsushita (Japanese corporation) for \$5.7 billion. The new entity is renamed Universal Studios.</p> 
<p>November 1995</p>	 <p>Westinghouse Electric Corp. acquires  CBS Inc. for \$5.4 billion.</p>
<p>February 1996</p>	 <p>Walt Disney Co. buys Capital Cities/ABC for \$19 billion. A new media conglomerate in movies, television and publishing is created.</p>

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October 1996	  <p>Time Warner merges with Turner Broadcasting System (a \$7.6 billion merger).</p>
December 1996	Two of the biggest radio station operators combine: Westinghouse Electric Corp.'s CBS unit buys Infinity Broadcasting Co. for \$4.7 billion
December 1997	 <p>Westinghouse Electric Corp. changes its name to CBS Inc. after selling its traditional businesses, including power-generated equipment and light bulbs.</p>
December 1998	 <p>The largest initial public offering (IPO) in the media industry: Infinity Broadcasting Corp., raising \$2.9 billion dollars. CBS Inc. sells 17 percent of</p>
December 1998	  <p>Seagram Co. purchases PolyGram music company for \$10.4 billion.</p>
August 1999	  <p>CBS Corp. agrees to buy King World Productions Inc., the leading syndicator of television programs, for \$2.5 billion.</p>
September 1999	  <p>Viacom Inc. announces deal to purchase CBS Corp. for \$81.5 billion. This is one of the largest media deals in U.S. history.</p>
October 1999	 <p>CLEAR CHANNEL Clear Channel announces a \$23 billion dollar takeover of the number two radio chain, AMFM</p>
January 2000	  <p>America Online merger with Time Warner Inc. This is the largest-</p>

	ever combination in the media industry (\$135 billion merger)
March 2000	 Tribune Co. (publishes Chicago Tribune) buys Times Mirror Co. , (publisher of the Los Angeles Times) for \$6.5 billion.
June 2000	 Vivendi ,  Seagram and  CANAL+ Canal+ merge. A fully integrated global media and communications company for the wired and wireless world is created.
November 2000	 Viacom buys  BET for \$3 billion.
October 2001	 EchoStar tries to become the dominant satellite television provider in the United States through a merger with  DirectTV (a \$25.8 billion deal). In 2002, the U.S. Justice Department thwarted the merger.
December 2001	 Vivendi Universal buys  USA network for \$10.3 billion.
December 2001	 Comcast Corp. merges with  at&t AT&T's broadband unit. This \$52 billion dollar merger will lead to a subscriber base of 22.3 million subscribers.
April 2003	 News Corp. acquire control of  HUGHES ELECTRONICS Hughes Electronics (parent company of DirectTV.) for a \$6.6 billion.












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<p>July 2003</p>	  <p>Yahoo acquires subsidiaries AltaVista and AlltheWeb</p> <p>Overture Services, Inc. and its</p>
<p>September 2003</p>	 <p>US regulators approve the \$3.2 billion purchase of Dallas-based Hispanic Broadcasting Corp. by Univision Communications UNIVISION. The new company is the biggest U.S. Spanish-language television and radio networks provider.</p> 
<p>October 2003</p>	 <p>NBC Universal is created through the combination of</p>   <p>Vivendi's Universal Studios and cable channels and GE's NBC television unit. This \$43 billion entertainment powerhouse was created to compete leading entertainment companies such as Walt Disney Co. and Viacom Inc.</p>
<p>February 2004</p>	  <p>Cingular Wireless buys AT&T Wireless Services Inc. for \$41 billion. This created the U.S.'s largest mobile phone company.</p>
<p>August 2004</p>	 <p>Sony BMG Music Entertainment is created by the merger of</p>   <p>Sony Music Entertainment and Bertelsmann Music Group (BMG). The new entity is jointly owned by the two companies (50/50).</p>

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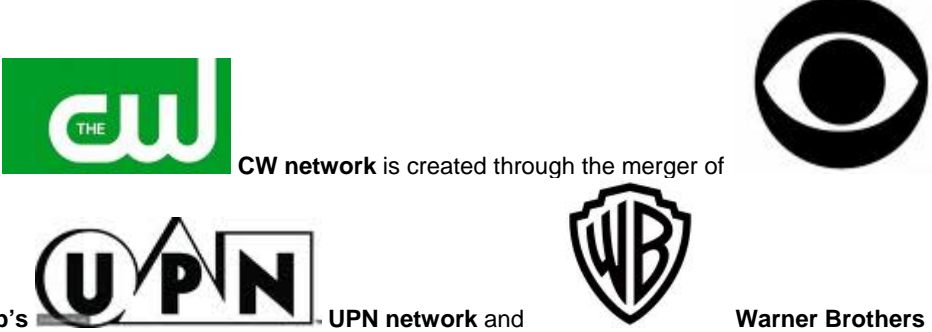
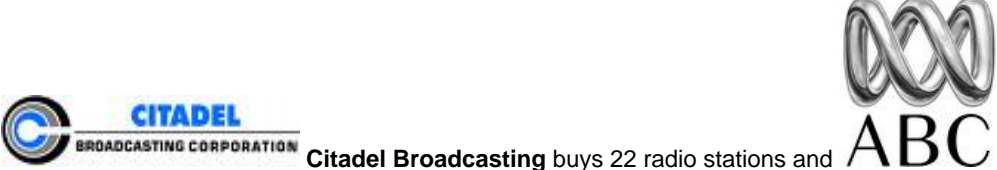




November 2004	 <p>Dow Jones & Company buys  MarketWatch, Inc., a top provider of business news and financial information, for \$519 million.</p>
January 2005	 <p>SBC Communications Inc., a leader in local exchange, broadband and wireless communications, announces plans to buy  AT&T for \$16 billion.</p>
February 2005	 <p>The New York Times Company announces an agreement to buy About, Inc., from PRIMEDIA Inc. for \$410 million.</p>
February 2005	 <p>Verizon Communications agrees to buy  MCI for \$6.7 billion</p>
March 2005	 <p>Viacom splits into two public companies. One company led by  Paramount Pictures would include the cable networks MTV, Nickelodeon, Comedy Central and Showtime, and entertainment properties.</p> <p>The second company would control the older assets, including CBS, the Infinity Radio unit and the firm's billboard business.</p>
April 2005	 <p>Time Warner and  Comcast Corp. reach agreement to buy bankrupt cable operator Adelphia Communications Corp. for \$17.6 billion.</p>

April 2005	 <p>Adobe Adobe Systems Inc.</p> <p>To extend its market for creating and distributing digital documents, Adobe Systems Inc., graphic software developer, purchases Macromedia Inc., multimedia software firm, for \$3.4 billion.</p>
July 2005	  <p>News Corp. agrees to buy Intermix Media, Inc., owner of MySpace.com, for \$580 million</p>
August 2005	  <p>Sprint Corp. buys Nextel Communications for \$35 billion. Sprint Nextel Corporation becomes the No. 3 U.S. wireless service.</p>
August 2005	  <p>Yahoo and Verizon Communications launch and integrated DSL service.</p>
September 2005	  <p>News Corporation acquires IGN Entertainment, Inc., a digital entertainment and video game company, for \$650 million.</p>
December 2005	  <p>Paramount Pictures agrees to purchase DreamWorks SKG Inc., an independent film studio, for \$1.6 billion. DreamWorks Animation SKG Inc is not included.</p>
January 2006	  <p>Walt Disney announces that it will purchase Pixar, a successful animation studio whose majority stocks are owned by Apple's Steve Jobs, for \$7.4 billion.</p>

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<p>January 2006</p>	 <p>The CW network is created through the merger of CBS Corp's UPN network and Warner Brothers Entertainment WB network. Each company will hold 50% interest in new network.</p>
<p>February 2006</p>	 <p>Citadel Broadcasting buys 22 radio stations and Radio Networks from Walt Disney Corporation for \$2.7 billion.</p>
<p>March 2006</p>	 <p>AT&T Inc. buys BellSouth Corp. for \$67 billion. AT&T now has total control of the joint venture, Cingular Wireless.</p>
<p>March 2006</p>	 <p>NBC Universal announces plans to buy iVillage for \$600 million deal.</p>
<p>March 2006</p>	 <p>The McClatchy Co. agrees to purchase 32 Knight Ridder Inc. newspapers for \$4.5 billion.</p>
<p>April 2006</p>	 <p>Viacom Inc. announces plans to buy an online games technology company,</p>









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	 <p>Xfire, for \$102 million.</p>
September 2006	  <p>Vivendi's Universal Music agrees to buy BMG Music Publishing for \$2 billion. Universal's music publishing holdings are now the largest in the world.</p>
October 2006	  <p>Google, buys YouTube for \$1.65 billion.</p>
December 2007	  <p>Viacom signs a \$500 million contract with Microsoft that allows Microsoft to license Viacom-owned shows on Xbox Live and MSN</p>
May 2009	  <p>Time Warner announces that AOL Inc. would become a separate independent company.</p>
July 2009	 <p>The Economist Group acquired Congressional Quarterly from Times Publishing co. for \$100 million</p>
October 2009	  <p>Adobe Systems Inc. merged with Omniture</p>
November 2009	  <p>NBC Universal and Comcast are in advanced stages</p>

	of merger to create a new \$30 million conglomerate.
December 2009	  <p>Disney Corp. buys Marvel Entertainment (parent company for Marvel Comics) for \$4.24 billion</p>
December 2009	 <p>Bloomberg L.P. bought Business Week from McGraw Hill for \$9.3 million</p>
January 2010	  <p>Apple acquires Quattro Wireless for \$275 million</p>
May 2010	  <p>Google acquires Admob for \$750 million</p>
July 2010	  <p>Disney Corp. acquires Playdom for \$563.2 million</p>
August 2010	  <p>Monster.com buys Hotjobs.com from Yahoo for \$225 million</p>
November 2010	  <p>News Corp. acquired 90% of wireless generation for \$360 million</p>
December 2010	  <p>Disney Corp. sells Miramax Films to Filmyard Holdings for \$663 million</p>

January 2011	  <p>Comcast Corp took over NBC Universal from General Electric Co. by acquiring a 51 percent stake in NBC.</p>
March 2011	  <p>AT&T agrees to buy T-Mobile for \$39 billion</p>
April 2011	  <p>Blockbuster is bought by Dish Network in a bankruptcy auction for \$320 million</p>
May 2011	  <p>Microsoft buys Skype for \$8.5 billion, the largest acquisition thus far in Microsoft's history.</p>

So what does this timeline mean?

Peter Price, President of the National Academy of Television Arts and Science Foundation, discusses the implications of the integration trends within the media industry: <http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>.

Martin Kon, Head of Media Practice at Oliver Wyman, examines new models in the media industry. <http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

Moral Dilemma: Security vs the Right to Know

Governments can claim the need to restrict information from the public in order to protect it. The public can then counter that restriction of information inevitably leads to the curtailment of rights. Obviously, there exists a tradeoff between the public's security and the public's right to know.

No government can keep *everything* from its people; virtually no government allows the unrestricted flow of information. So, most governments can be characterized as points on a continuum, with those allowing the unrestricted flow of information on one end and those with complete control of information at the other.⁷⁷

The People's Republic of China is near the controlled end, while Sweden is at or near the opposite end.⁷⁸ The United States is somewhere between the middle and unrestricted end, no doubt more open than its fellow democracy, the United Kingdom.⁷⁹ (Even these points are dynamic, constantly subject to change dependent upon many factors.)

The Pentagon Papers

The release of the Pentagon Papers was a watershed moment in the history of media. In addition to its implications about the worldwide Cold War—as well as the Civil Rights movement in America and the Vietnam War in Southeast Asia—the affair provided a vivid, real-world example of the philosophical questions regarding the balance between a government's ability to provide security and a free society's right to information about that government.

Officially titled “United States-Vietnam Relations, 1945-1967: A Study Prepared by the Department of Defense,” the Pentagon Papers were a study conducted by the United States Department of Defense chronicling American political-military involvement in Vietnam from 1945-1967. The study, completed in 1968, was highly classified and not meant for publication.

Daniel Ellsberg was a State Department diplomat who served in Vietnam during the Vietnam War. As a key contributor to the Pentagon Papers, he had the high level of clearance necessary to access the complete documents. After growing disillusioned with the conflict, Ellsberg and colleague Anthony Russo secretly made copies of the papers in late 1969.

After failing throughout 1970 to convince sympathetic US Senators to release the papers on the Senate floor—because Senators could not be prosecuted for anything said on-the-record before the Senate—Ellsberg leaked the papers to *New York Times* reporter Neil Sheehan.

After much legal battling between the US Attorney General and the *Times* and the *Washington Post*, the US Supreme court ruled in favor of the two newspapers on June 30, 1971, allowing them to continue publishing the

⁷⁷ Melanson, Philip H. *Secrecy Wars*. Potomac Books, Inc. 2002. p. 2

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

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Pentagon Papers.⁸⁰ The US government published its unclassified version of the Pentagon Papers about three months later.

In the middle of a war, did the American public have the right to know the contents of the Pentagon Papers? Why or why not? Was there room for compromise between the issues of security and the right to know? What are some recent examples of security vs right to know issues? Are there any hypothetical situations where security would be so paramount that the right to know should be abrogated? If so, what would they be?

WikiLeaks

Started in 2007 by Sunshine Press and run by Australian publisher, journalist, computer programmer, and Internet activist, Julian Assange, WikiLeaks has caused immense controversy and debate around the topic of freedom of speech and the media.

The website is based on the premise that all governments should practice openness and transparency. It functions through leaked information that can be passed to them by anyone and through a variety of means. WikiLeaks promises these people anonymity. The information (whether documents, photos, or videos) is thoroughly checked to make sure it is genuine. The leaked information is then published on the website in its original form along with a news story created by the journalists of WikiLeaks.⁸¹

“Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society’s institutions, including government, corporations and other organisations.”⁸² This statement is taken from the WikiLeaks website and sums up their belief system, which they believe is doing right and is beneficial. The website and its supporters hail it as an important landmark for free speech in the media, specifically pointing to its ability to cause the “world’s media...[to] work together.”⁸³

Nonetheless, the website has come across much attack. Its most significant release of information was in 2010 when the website released 260,000 U.S. diplomatic cables and a video from Afghanistan. The information was passed to WikiLeaks from within the U.S. Army itself. Bradley Manning, a U.S. army intelligence analyst stationed in Baghdad, accessed and downloaded this confidential data. When he was turned in by a friend, he was immediately arrested.

WikiLeaks was then taken to court by the U.S. government and Julian Assange was later arrested on sexual charges though few were ignorant of the other issues at stake. While this may have been a step forward for the first amendment, the cables caused disruption in various foreign relations. It was hardly easy to ignore the various insulting comments towards foreign leaders that were prevalent in the cables.⁸⁴ Tim Wu, a professor at Columbia Law School, noted, the U.S. should not go after Assange because it would undermine their image of democracy and transparency. This was especially important considering their campaigns in the Middle East.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Gold, Susan Dudley. *The Pentagon Papers*. p. 116-118

⁸¹ WikiLeaks. *What is Wikileaks?*. <http://wikileaks.org/About.html>

⁸² WikiLeaks. *What is Wikileaks?*.

⁸³ WikiLeaks. *What is Wikileaks?*.

⁸⁴ Calabresi, Massimo. “WikiLeaks’ War on Secrecy: Truth’s Consequences.” *Time Magazine*. December 2, 2010. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2034488-4,00.html>

⁸⁵ Wu, Tim. “Drop the Case Against Assange.” *Foreign Policy*. February 4, 2011.

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Another problem that arose from WikiLeaks' operations concerned the anonymity of their sources. Although they say they protect their sources' identities, four hundred name of Afghanis who had helped the U.S. efforts in Afghanistan were found in the leaked cables. This was picked up by opponents of WikiLeaks, who pointed out the immense danger in which these people were now in.⁸⁶

WikiLeaks represents a step forward for the media and free speech but it faces a constant battle from those who seek to shut it down. It puts into question whether there are any government secrets that are better kept out of the public eye.

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/02/04/drop_the_case_against_assange?page=0,1

⁸⁶ Reals, Tucker. "WikiLeaks Reportedly Outs 100s of Afghan Informants." CBS News World Watch. July 28, 2010.
http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503543_162-20011886-503543.html

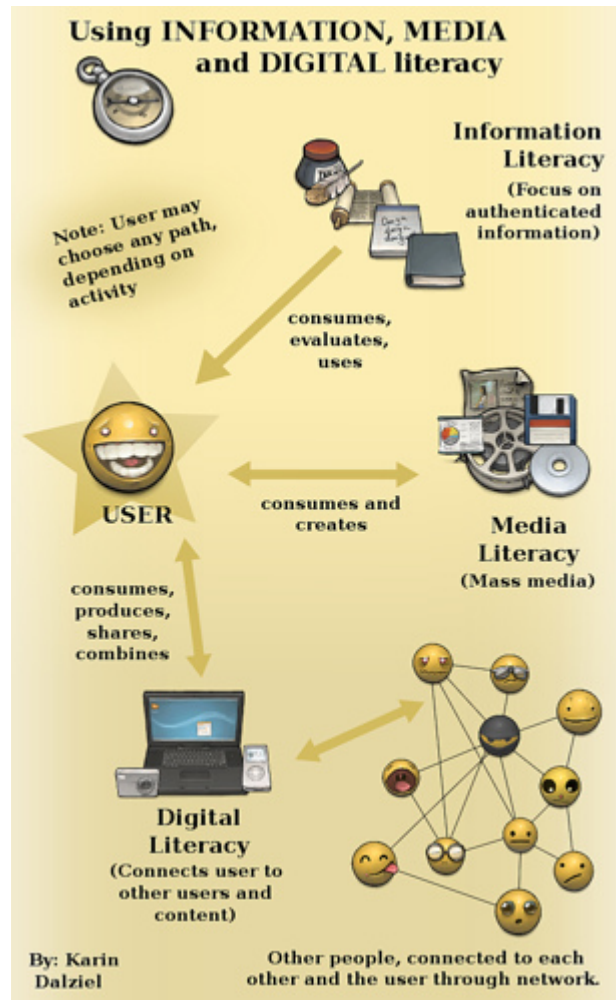
Conclusion

The media allows access to incredible amounts of information and continues to become very integral to the lives of many people. That's why as the world becomes more globalized, it is more necessary than ever to pay attention to the media itself.

It's important that media consumers not be *passive*; rather, they need to be constantly *active*. Instead of just "absorbing" media content like sponges, consumers should be constantly asking themselves and others questions about the media. Some examples are:

- "Who, if anyone, controls the media services I use?"
- "When I read the news, do the reporters have any underlying agendas or biases?"
- "When I watch the news, is the information I receive accurate and complete?"
- "When I hear the news, are opposing perspectives honestly presented?"
- "Is there too much mixing between information and entertainment?"
- "Is it a waste of time to pay attention to some media sources?"

Also, new technologies—especially Internet-based ones—allow more and more people to become producers of media themselves. A few examples are videos, blogs, social networking sites, Internet forums and mobile phones. It's important that these and other media-producing services are used. Expressing one's opinion is not only important for oneself, but important to others as well since they can gain new perspectives.



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nirak/1383955080/>

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Glossary

Bandwidth: the information-carrying capacity of a network or connection

Economies of scale: savings achieved because an initial investment is spread out over increasing numbers of produced units

FCC: a US government agency responsible for regulating communications industries

Mass media: any form of media designed for use by large sets of people.

Monopoly: a market in which there are many buyers but only one seller

Net neutrality: a principle proposed for Internet use such that network providers do not interfere with content shared between end-users, such as consumers and websites

Personal media: any form of media designed for use by a specific person

Telecommunications Reform Act of 1996: a 1996 US act which sought to move all telecommunications markets towards competition, "both in the markets for the various elements that comprise the telecommunications network, as well as for the final services the network creates"⁸⁷

Web2.0: general trend of interactivity between users and a website

Zeitgeist: in the spirit of the time or public opinion

⁸⁷ <http://www.stern.nyu.edu/networks/telco96.html>

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Suggested Readings

General

Media NYC 2020: NYC as a Global Media Center

<http://www.levininstitute.org/media2020.cfm>

Innovation in Media: When Global Meets Digital

<http://www.levininstitute.org/mediainnovation.cfm>

Ken Auletta's Book on Media: <http://www.kenauletta.com/books.html>

Mass Media vs Personal Media

Evolution of YouTube could mark the beginning of age of personal media

http://www.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/kevinmaney/2006-06-13-youtube_x.htm

iPod era of personal media choices may be turning us into an iSolation nation

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/arizonaliving/articles/0912customize0912.html>

Web 2.0

How to Make Your Own Blog

http://www.ehow.com/how_5041846_make-own-blog.html

Ownership

Timeline: And Then There Were Eight

http://www.motherjones.com/files/legacy/news/feature/2007/03/and_then_there_were_eight.pdf

The Structure and Dynamics of Global Multi-Media Business Networks

<http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/view/298/188>

Interlocking Directorates

<http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=2870>

Media Ownership Research Studies

<http://www.fcc.gov/ownership/studies.html>

Globalization 101

The **LEVIN** Institute
The State University of New York

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Who Owns What

<http://www.cjr.org/resources>

Media Giants

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/giants/>

Trends in the Media Industry

Timeline of Media Mega Mergers

link:<http://www.commoncause.org/site/pp.asp?c=dkLNK1MQIwG&b=4923181>