Communication: Mass and Other Forms

Chapter 1
CHAPTER OUTLINE

• The Communication Process
• Communication Settings
• Traditional Media Organizations
• The Internet And Mass Communication
• Models For Studying Mass Communication
• Modern Mass Media: Emerging Trends
THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Figure 1-1: *Elements of the Communication Process*
Transmitting the Message

• Source
• Encoding
• Message
• Channels
Receiving the Message

- Decoding
- Receiver
- Feedback
- Noise
COMMUNICATION SETTINGS

• We will consider three different communication settings
Interpersonal Communication

- Individual or groups
- Physical presence required
- Encoding is a one-step process
- Variety of channels
- Messages hard for receiver to terminate
- Little or no expense
- Messages generally private
- Messages can pinpoint specific targets
- Immediate feedback
Machine-Assisted Interpersonal Communication

\[
\text{SOURCE} \downarrow \quad \text{-- machine --} \downarrow \quad \text{RECEIVER}
\]
Machine-Assisted Interpersonal Communication

(2 of 3)

• Source and receiver
  – May be individuals or groups; may be machine

• Feedback
  – Immediate or delayed; may be impossible

• Messages
  – Customizability varies
  – Private or public
  – Inexpensive to send
• Encoding can be simple to complex
  – Source: thoughts → words or symbols
  – Machines: encode messages for transmission
• Channel options restricted
• Decoding similar to encoding
  – Machines: electrical energy → light patterns
  – Receiver: words or symbols → thoughts
Mass Communication (1 of 3)

• Occurs when a complex organization, with machine aid, produces and transmits public messages to large, heterogeneous, scattered audiences.
Mass Communication (2 of 3)

- **Pre-Internet:** Source is structured organization
- **Internet:** Source can be one person
- Sender gets little audience information
- Encoding is a multi-stage process
- Messages are public and impersonal
- Effective feedback difficult
Mass Communication (3 of 3)

• Mass Communication Audiences
  – Large
  – Heterogeneous
  – Geographically dispersed
  – Individually anonymous
  – Self-selected
Defining Mass Media

• Medium is channel through which message travels from source to receiver
  – “Medium” is singular; “Media” is plural
• Mass media are channels for mass communication, and the institutions that transmit the messages
• Media vehicle: single component of mass media; newspaper, radio station, magazine
TRADITIONAL MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS

• Traditional mass communicators share some common characteristics
Formal Organizational Structure

• Mass media typically have well-defined organizational structure.
• Generally involves specialization and division of labor.
• Generally a bureaucracy
• Channels of communication with organization are generally formal.
Many Gatekeepers

• Gatekeeper: Any person/group controlling what material eventually reaches the public.

• More complex organizations = more gatekeepers.
Large Operating Expenses

• Costs millions of dollars to buy and maintain a mass media organization.

• Current trend: consolidation of media ownership.
  – Time Warner, Walt Disney Company, Sony, News Corporation, Vivendi, Comcast, Bertelsmann
Competition for Profits

• Most media organizations in US exist to make a profit.
• Profit usually made by selling audiences to advertisers
• Media organizations compete to attract audiences
THE INTERNET AND MASS COMMUNICATION

• Websites:
  – Affordable, can be produced by individual
  – Bypass gatekeepers
  – Creativity reigns
  – Low start-up and maintenance costs
  – Audience competition not always a factor
MODELS FOR STUDYING MASS COMMUNICATION

• The traditional model of mass communication was a “one-to-many” model. Media organizations encoded information from the environment, and reproduced it many times over using the appropriate channel.
  – Little direct interaction between sources and receivers
An Internet Model of Mass Communication (1 of 2)

Figure 1-3
An Internet Model of Mass Communication (2 of 2)

• A new arrangement, allowing multiple levels of communication
  – One to one (email)
  – One to many (CNN.com)
  – Few to few (chatrooms, blogs)
  – Many to many (eBay)
  – Audience competition not always a factor

• Messages not linear; content provided by organizations and users.
MODERN MASS MEDIA: EMERGING TRENDS

• As media continue to evolve, several trends have become apparent
Audience Segmentation: The End of Mass Communication as We Know it?

- Mass communication: Less mass, more selective.
  - Audience fractionalization or segmentation
  - Reduced audience for any single media vehicle
  - Definition of mass communication still applies; audiences still large, organizations still complex
  - Specialization is evident, but potential to reach mass audience still exists
Convergence

• Convergence means coming together or uniting in common theme or focus.
  – **Corporate Convergence.** Companies acquire assets extending range of activities.
  – **Operational Convergence.** Owners of several media properties combine operations.
  – **Device Convergence.** One mechanism contains functions of two or more devices.
Increased Audience Control

• Audience members can control what they see and hear, and when.
• Technological advances (VCR, DVR, VOD) give more power to consumer.
• More sources of information, including blogs
• More flexibility in consuming products (download single track vs. buy full album)
Multiple Platforms

- A strategy making content available via a number of different delivery methods to a number of different receiving devices.
  - Example: Music videos started on cable/satellite networks, went to websites, to iPods, to cell phones.
  - Television content, newspaper content, magazine content, all are repackaged for multiple devices.
User-Generated Content

• User-generated content (peer production): people share and collaborate on content.
  – YouTube, MySpace, Flickr, Wikipedia

• Reflects Web 2.0
  – Web 2.0 = communities, people, uploading
  – Web 1.0 = companies, pages, downloading
Mobile Media

• Small screen devices allow media to become increasingly mobile
  – PDAs
  – Cell phones
  – Laptop computers
  – iPods

• Significant milestone in development of communication