History of Communications Media

Class 2

History of Communications Media

- Today's Class
  - Manuscript Cultures
  - The Impact of Printing

History of Communications Media

- Manuscript cultures
  - A high literate culture and a low village culture
  - Texts tended to be read aloud even to those who could read
  - Letters and documents were quasi-public
  - Writing served as input into the oral world
  - Manuscripts had incipits and chapter/verse designations rather than titles or page numbers

History of Communications Media

- Manuscript cultures – 2
  - Books are treasured items
  - The manuscript book had interesting corollaries
  - Word separation and punctuation of text did not become standard until the later Middle Ages
  - The sermon and public readings served as news dissemination media
  - What was ancient was venerated

Printing

– Johann Gutenberg of Mainz was a German goldsmith and printer who was the first European to use movable type printing, in around 1439, and the global inventor of the mechanical printing press.

– After printing several books, he started printing his famous Gutenberg Bible in 1455

  • About 180 of these Bibles were printed

  • The Gutenberg Bible could best be described as a printed manuscript rather than a printed book

Printing

- Gutenberg's printing press depended on 3 innovations which he combined
  - Movable type cast in metal
  - Oil-based ink
  - Wooden press

Printing

- Printing spread very rapidly
  - By 1480, 110 towns had printing presses
  - By 1500, 236 towns had print shops
- It greatly multiplied the number of books and titles
  - Before Gutenberg, there were an estimated 30,000 manuscript books in Europe
  - By 1500, there were more than 20 million books in 35,000 titles

Printing

- Some Notes about Printing - 1
  - Printing involved not only text but also images, maps, diagrams, and data tables
  - Economics of printing – high upfront costs combined with relatively small marginal costs for each additional item
    - This contrasted sharply with the economics of manuscript production where upfront costs were low but marginal costs were extremely high

Printing

- Some Notes about Printing – 2
  - Effects of printing took a long time to show their effects
  - Out of printing emerged not only the printed book, but also the:
    - Broadside
    - Pamphlet
    - Leaflet
    - Newspaper
    - Scholarly Journal
    - Poster
    - Magazine
    - Cartoon
    - Comic Strip

Printing

- The Printing Revolution had a host of effects, all stemming from the fact that Print:
    - Made possible the mass production of books and other printed material
    - Drastically lowered the cost of reproducing information
    - Produced typographical fixity

Printing

- Some effects of lower costs:
  - Reduced books from a status symbol of wealth to a mere commodity
  - Made the monastic scriptoria and the university scriveners obsolete
    - Reduced the economic importance of the monasteries
  - Made it economically feasible to publish books in the vernacular languages as well as Latin

Printing

- Intellectual effects of the Print Revolution
  - Made Possible a vast expansion of knowledge. It did this in the following ways:
    - Re-arranging the arts and routines of book-making in a way that brought printers, intellectuals, merchants, and workers into contact with each other
    - Revealed the knowledge deficits and errors in ancient texts
    - Permitted scholars to improve and correct their works in subsequent editions
    - Created print shops that were meeting places and message centers for scholars

Printing

- Intellectual Effects of the Print Revolution – 2
  - By making possible a vast expansion of knowledge, printing changed the concept of knowledge
    - It changed knowledge from the notion of a closed body of knowledge passed down generation to generation to a concept of knowledge as the result of an open-ended investigatory process pressing against ever-advancing frontiers

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 1
  - Created a 'reading public'
  - Fostered privacy and isolation
    - Reading demands quiet and freedom from distraction
    - Print set the stage psychologically for solo reading
    - Replaced aural reading with silent reading
    - Printed books permitted people to escape from the outside world

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 2
  - Made possible the creation of identical images, maps, diagrams, charts, and numerical tables
    - This fostered the development of science
    - It permitted copies of art works to be seen by people who would never visit the site where the original artwork was located
    - It led to the mass printing of playing cards and religious images

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 3
  - Made possible the creation of more accurate maps
    - Printing made possible an era of feedback from map users to mapmakers
    - It also prevented the degradation that results over successive generations of a map

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 4
  - Made possible the creation of illustrated books
    - This was a boon to science, technology, and engineering
  - The creation of illustrated books and other illustrated material
    - Made celebrities out of authors and people who were the subject of a book
    - Enabled rulers to impress their personal image on their subjects

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 5
  - Created private ownership of knowledge
  - This led to:
    - The concept of the author
    - Resentment of plagiarism
    - Copyright laws
  - Copyright laws led to the practice of authors selling their manuscripts to publishers

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 6
  - Extended the power of monarchs and bureaucrats
    - As noted before, prints and engravers made it possible for rulers to make his facial image and physical features known to his subjects
    - Monarchs were quick to use print to convey information to their subjects and to affect the attitudes of their subjects

Printing

- The Print Revolution – 7
  - Led to the institution of censorship
    - Political & religious leaders were quick to see the power of print. This led them to:
      - Require printers to be licensed
      - Restricting the number of printers in the realm
      - Censorship
        » Banning of radical, heretical, pornographic, and libelous books
    - Censorship in turn led to attempts at evasion, such as smuggling of banned books into countries that banned them

Printing

- Language Effects of the Print Revolution - 1
  - Affected both Latin and the vernacular languages of Europe
    - As noted earlier, printing made it profitable to publish books in vernacular languages as well as in Latin
      - This raised the status of vernacular languages such as English, French, and German by giving them a literary status equal to that of Latin
      - This contributed to the slow decline of Latin as a European elite lingua franca

Printing

- Language Effects of the Print Revolution -2
  - Whether or not there was a printed Bible in the language determined whether the language became permanent or became a mere provincial dialect
  - Printing contributed to the homogenization of many regional dialects into a few national languages

Printing

- Language effects of the Print Revolution - 3
  - Printing led to standardized grammar and spelling
    - This in turn led to notions of 'correctness' in language
    - The idea of using correct language in turn led to mass publication of dictionaries
  - Printing replaced poetry with prose

Printing

- What Print does that the Manuscript does not
  - Print permitted externalization of our memories
  - Print made the Bible a single book rather than a collection of discrete mss known as the Scriptures
  - Print fostered a linear, rational, sequential way of thinking

Printing

- What Print does that the Manuscript does not - 2
  - Print permitted pagination; Mss were organized by chapter and verse
  - Pagination led to page numbers, indexes, cross-references, and table of contents – all lacking in manuscripts
  - Print led to title pages; Mss were labeled by their incipits

Printing

- What Print does that the Manuscript does not – 3
  - Print led to the concept of the book as a logical unit
  - Print changed the document focus from that of the producer/copyist to that of the reader
  - Print encouraged a sense of closure and finality – the idea that the represents the author's words in a definitive or final form

Printing

- Significant Social and Historical Effects
  - Print was a major factor in the development of the following:
    - Capitalism
    - The Protestant Reformation
    - Nationalism
    - Intellectual Liberalism
    - The creation of childhood as a distinct social category
- I will discuss each in turn

Printing

- Printing and the Development of Capitalism
  - Printing shops were the first major urban capitalist enterprises
    - Print shop economics – large up-front costs combined with later revenues
    - The print shop's demand for paper stimulated the growth of the paper manufacturing industry which led it to rationalize the collection of rags
    - Printing press technology anticipated many features of industrial production

Printing

- Printing and the Protestant Reformation
  - When Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Theses to the church door, he saw it as merely an invitation to an academic disputation
  - Protestantism was the first religious movement to fully exploit printing's potential as a mass medium
    - Luther described printing as "God's highest and extremist act of grace, whereby the business of the gospel is driven forward."

Printing

- Printing and the Protestant Reformation - 2
  - Printing brought into focus many troublesome issues that had been easily glossed over before
    - One issue was the relation of Scripture and Tradition
    - Another was the relationship of faith and works
  - Printing with its focus on the word of God led to simpler forms of church architecture
    - Art was banished from the churches – compare the Gothic cathedral with the Old South Church

Printing

- Printing and the Protestant Reformation - 3
  - Popular editions of the Bible (such as the Luther & King James versions) had some interesting results:
    - They led people to draw an inevitable contrast between the idealized origin Church depicted in Acts and its current reality
      - Led many to see the present as a corruption and a decline from the past
    - Contrary to the intentions of the Reformers, it led to the fracturing of Protestantism

Printing

- The Book of Scripture or the Book of Nature – both were seen as the handiwork of God
  - Printing had a differential impact on the study of both:
    - Biblical scholarship could not get back to the pure original words of God before they had been corrupted by copyists over time
    - The study of nature, however, could progress as corrupted scientific data could be compared with, and corrected by, current observations and experiments

Printing

- But if the Book of Nature (what science revealed) seemed to contradict the Book of Scripture (what God revealed), then what:
    - For intellectuals and members of the educated elite, the logical conclusion was that the Book revealed by science was true and that the Bible was simply a collection of legends
    - For common believers, the logical conclusion was that Scripture was an infallible source of scientific knowledge

Printing

- Printing and the Rise of Nationalism
  - Printing fostered the idea of being part of large-scale collective groups
  - Printing, as noted earlier, elevated the status of the vernacular language, thus fostering a sense of ethnic-linguistic nationalism
  - Printing created walls between different language groups while homogenizing differences within
  - Print media proved very useful in arousing nationalist feelings and hatreds

Printing

- Printing and Intellectual Liberalism
  - Printers disliked censorship
    - They were natural libertarians who generally wanted the freedom to print whatever they wanted and whatever they thought would sell
  - Printers had to deal with scholars and intellectuals
    - This in itself contributed to liberal attitudes since intellectual pursuits brought together people from very diverse backgrounds and from different religions

Printing

- **Printing and Childhood**
  - Printing created childhood as a distinct social category
    - In the centuries after the invention of printing, Adulthood was redefined – one became an adult by learning how to read
    - Before the printing press, children became adults by learning to speak – a behavior for which all humans are hardwired and which they generally master by age 7
      - Thus the Catholic Church and the Law both defined age 7 as the age of reason and the age at which they became morally and legally responsible for their actions

Printing

- Printing and Childhood – 2
  - After printing, children had to earn adulthood by becoming literate, for which people are not hardwired
    - This meant children had to go to school
    - With the establishment of schools, children came to be viewed as a special class of people different from adults
  - People began to see human development as a series of stages, with childhood being a bridge between infancy and adulthood
    - Before print, children were seen as little adults and seen as part of the adult world

Printing

- As noted before, printing led to new formats and genres of literature:
  - Early genres included the book, broadside, and pamphlet
  - The mid-17th century saw the newspaper
  - The late-17th –early-18th centuries saw the scholarly journal
  - The 19th century saw the daily newspaper and the magazine