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Mass Communications

February 5, 2012

Innovation or Regression?

Only centuries ago, the majority of people were getting news through word of mouth, and word of mouth only. Compared to the billions of years the world has existed, this is seemingly only a second ago. In only the last millisecond, our society has grown exponentially into the age of information. Technology has catapulted our world into a mentality where we need to know everything this very instant. There is no time for the word to get around. Naturally in this manner, the average person may have three or four devices that can instantly tell them breaking news, and help them to check in with 600 of their closest friends. Cell phones, computers, televisions, MP3 players, and tablets can all share the same information instantaneous, there is no doubt mass media has an overwhelming affect on our world. The media is making society move faster, therefore changing it in many ways. Institutions like education, which have not changed for centuries, are now being altered to fit the growing influence of mass media. The power of mass media has changed our society in terms of language, education, and communication.

Mass media has affected our societies written language and how it is used. Essentially the media had led to the less formal nature of the written word in our culture, but this does not necessarily mean worse quality. Outlets like Twitter with limited space for entries have made people conscious of making their ideas more concise (Sherman). Language has not only come concise in ideas but also in actually letters. According to Lytle in US News & World Report, a teacher says, “They do not capitalize words or use punctuation anymore. Even in E-mails to teachers or [on] writing assignments, any word longer than one syllable is now abbreviated to one.” However, the media’s new language is not wrong, just different. Change in language is stemming from the constant addiction to mass media when not in an educational setting. On social media websites, correct spelling is ignored, so this ideology travels into the classroom. The abbreviation of ideas and words is being brought into schools with the hopes that teachers will understand the adjustment that children have quickly made (Lytle). Yet children are not the only ones participating. In the workplace, texting coworkers and sending off rapid-fire emails is commonplace. This new language is quickly being integrated into society, replacing formal language.

Along with language, education has changed drastically with the onslaught of mass media. According to Lytle in US News & World Report, “Education is about adaptation to some degree,” leading the new advances to be placed under this category of change. Television has been the biggest source of mass media since its invention. With the television, one can learn from the things they see without actively trying to learn. This type of passive learning connects the images on the screen to real world situations allowing the information to be better understood (Barbour). However, television has led to learning that is more fast-paced, sometimes too quick. With text, one can set the learning speed of cognition, whereas television is one speed for all (Kozma). The education of children through their parents is also affected by mass media. Adults use television, the Internet and other media to educate themselves about childcare strategies. Children grow to learn in this fashion by reading online or watching videos. Books and other print publications have been replaced by the new vibrant images on the television and computer influencing the quality and techniques of education.

Communication is also heavily affected by the growing influence of mass communication on our society. Traditionally, attitudes and behaviors were mimicked off of others through personal relations. Today people can watch television and be influenced into a number of different ideas, such illegal substance abuse, without speaking to anyone (Kozma). Like television, Facebook, the most prominent social networking website, greatly sways peoples behavior. It is not often that a conversation between teenagers goes by without the mention of Facebook photos or posts, while neglecting to mention things that occur in real life (Turgeon). One of the major benefits that Facebook has brought to society is allowing shy teens to become outgoing while still feeling comfortable. However, many may view this as disadvantageous, since interpersonal skills are lacking. Larry Rosen, a psychology professor at California State University, explains that Facebook is not, “an established media form… it is something that's very new (Turgeon).” Society is only seeing the beginnings of personal problems due to Facebook. Likewise, society is only seeing the tip of the iceberg as far as the implications of mass media on our communication skills.

Language, education, and communication are all alike in the fashion that they are vital parts of the society that have been forever crucial. All three institutions have been through changes and alterations in society, but nothing as drastic as the technological revolution we are currently experiencing. Society has elevated itself to a new level of excellence with its advancements in the form of mass media. Many would question the term “excellence” and if these advancements are bringing society in the right direction. As convenient and helpful as mass media has become, it has far too many negative affects on society. With lacking communication skills, passive education, and simpler language, is our society headed in a direction of doom or greatness? Time will surely tell.

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