

Preface

Previous adopters will notice something different about the seventh edition: It has a subtitle. The timing seemed right to add “Media in the Digital Age” to *The Dynamics of Mass Communication*.

I did a Google search for the term “digital age” and got back 295,000 hits, including such items as privacy in the digital age, art in the digital age, children in the digital age, scholars’ information requirements in the digital age (I read that one carefully), archives in the digital age, culture in the digital age, antitrust in the digital age, matte painting in the digital age (?), dentistry in the digital age, Hootie and the Blowfish in the digital age. I could go on with another 294,991 examples, but I think I already made the point: There’s something to this digital age thing.



BEING DIGITAL

Sometime between 1998 (when much of the sixth edition was written) and 2001 (when the seventh edition appears), the digital age came of age. Consider just a few of the events that transpired during this period:

- The number of American homes with computers passed the 50 percent mark.
- The number of regular Internet users increased to 100 million.
- Napster’s digital music file-sharing program attracted more than 50 million users and shook up an entire industry.
- Stephen King and Elmore Leonard both wrote e-books designed for the online community.
- *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* was released in digital form.
- Two digital radio satellite companies announced plans to start a service for car radios.
- Digital AOL absorbed traditional Time Warner in a \$183 billion deal.
- My cable company went digital, and now I have to pay an extra \$4.95 per month for a converter. (Granted, this last event is not on the same level as AOL/Time Warner, but it hit closer to home.)

I have tried to make the seventh edition reflect these changes. Specifically:

- Chapter 1 includes a new model for studying mass communication that reflects the new reality of the Internet as mass communication.
- Chapter 1 also introduces the term “disintermediation,” a neologism of the digital age with profound implications for mass communication.
- Chapter 3 has an expanded section describing the digital revolution. I have tried to explain it using Nicholas Negroponte’s distinction between “atoms” and “bits.”
- The chapters in Parts Two and Three (the “media” chapters) all have new sections detailing how each medium is dealing with the digital age.
- Chapter 8 contains a section on the impact of Napster on the sound-recording business.

- Chapter 11 (“The Internet and the World Wide Web”) has been expanded and talks about broadband access, streaming video, Web TV, and e-commerce.
- The chapters in Part Four (the “media professions” chapters) contain extended treatment of how news reporting, advertising, and public relations are adapting to digital media.
- In all chapters I have tried to use examples that stress digital media.



BOX SCORE

As in past editions, the boxed inserts in each chapter provide background material, present further examples of topics mentioned in the text, and raise issues that students might think about or discuss. The seventh edition contains more than 80 revised or new boxed inserts. Also as in previous editions, I have kept the issue-oriented focus in constructing these inserts. More than 40 spotlight some kind of pertinent ethical, social, or critical/cultural issue. In addition, a new series of “Decision Makers” boxes features profiles of key figures in the various media whose choices have had a significant impact on the development of their industries.



MORE CRITICAL/CULTURAL

The sixth edition introduced the critical/cultural perspective to the *Dynamics of Mass Communication*. The seventh edition expands on this perspective by including four new or revised Critical/Cultural Issues boxes that illustrate the approach.



WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

In addition to the items mentioned above, the following are new to this edition:

- Parts Two and Three (the “media” chapters) contain a new section that briefly describes the defining features of each medium.
- The history sections in Parts Two and Three have been streamlined for easier reading.
- Chapter 15 has an extended discussion about copyright and the Internet.
- Chapter 16 uses the *Los Angeles Times*–Staples Center brouhaha to illustrate the workings of the ethical model presented at the beginning of the chapter.
- Chapter 18 includes a section on research about the social impact of the Internet.
- The questions at the end of each chapter are now divided into two sets. One set of questions reviews material in the chapter, while the other set encourages more critical thinking about topics raised in the chapter.



KEEPING IT CURRENT

As Bill Gates is fond of saying, “The Internet changes everything.” That has been especially true for the mass media in the past couple of years. The task of bringing each chapter up to date was much more challenging because of the impact of the

net. Nonetheless, all chapters and tables have been revised to reflect the most recent information available at press time. Finally, the book has been given a sparkly new design in keeping with the digital age.



SOMETHING FAMILIAR

Past users of *Dynamics* will notice some continuity from the sixth to the seventh edition. The number of chapters remains the same, as does the book's organization. Further, the emphasis on media economics is maintained in the seventh edition. Media mergers, competition, convergence, and the bottom line are still important factors in understanding digital age media. In addition, the book's emphasis on the social impact of the media has been preserved. The concern over the media's effect on antisocial behavior, the controversy over media coverage of scandals involving public figures, and the media's role in the recent tumult surrounding the 2000 presidential election make this material crucial for students to know.

Once again (and it gets harder every time), I have tried to keep the writing style informal and conversational. As before, I have chosen many examples from popular culture that I hope all students are familiar with. Technical terms are boldfaced and defined in the Glossary. I have also included a number of charts, tables, and figures that I hope will aid understanding.

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Additional videos are available from your McGraw-Hill sales representative.



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In closing, I'll repeat what I said in the six prior editions (I can't find anything better to say). The media are a vital force in our society; I hope this book helps us understand them even better.

Joseph R. Dominick