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Why do I study the history of multimedia?

My personal interest in learning the history of multimedia is due to my career of being a producer for both commercials and film. Multimedia is a concept that is discussed and utilized every day in my life so it only makes sense to learn the foundations and impacts that multimedia has had in the world. Watching the videos and films created by others is not only a favorite pastime, but also a learning experience with every actor, shot, sound bite, music, and flash of color that hits the screen. It is incredible to understand what all it takes for a commercial, music video, or film to come to life.

The combination of different forms of media is pure art and it can be beautiful. I feel very grateful to have a passion for such a creative career that allows me to use multimedia every day and work with people who have the same passion for different types of media. The developments in the last six hundred years have been outstanding in the speed of one invention to the next and in the individuals who have made these things possible. I plan to use this essay to explore the chronological information I was introduced to during the history of multimedia course and briefly touch on how the events have caused new ideas to form or why they apply to career.

Just as Kovarik's book is called *Revolutions in Communication*, Gutenberg revolutionized the overall ideas of Individualism, Objectivity, Abstract and creative thinking. Gutenberg revolutionized communication forever and his invention led us to where we are today in the world of media. People were able to become independent from the church and read the Bible from home. The idea of studying religion on your own meant people could interpret the Bible themselves with objectivity. When basic religious practices were being reformed, people were introduced to the notion of abstract and creative thinking. As concepts were becoming more objective, pulpits

begin to change sermons and people begin to share their thoughts and opinions over religion and other topics (Price).

While I had previously learned about Martin Luther and the 95 Theses he nailed on the church door, I now have a better understanding of how thanks to the Gutenberg press Martin Luther was able to easily spread his ideas and lead others to see the Bible in their own vernacular. Martin Luther essentially posted a huge piece of propaganda on the church door urging individuals to think and read for themselves. His act caused people to form their own opinions, although the church and king fought back with censorship. Having the Bible in their own vernacular helped countries to start having books in their own language and allowed even unskillful people to learn to read which led to the development on the newspaper.

Once information and news was being shared in cities and countries by means of paper in the 16 and 1700s, there was an outlet for advertising. The first coffee ad even made claims of how coffee could help with headaches and coughs. In 1663, the German literature and philosophy magazine established that there was a market for target audiences. The US joined the craze of marketing when the first newspaper ad for Oyster Bay real estate came out in 1704. The spread of opinions, discoveries, and marketing, as well as historical events helped lead to the industrial revolution. Mass production became more prominent, especially in places like America.

By 1775, the American Revolution started when the colonies wanted freedom from English Rule. Now I had always heard of Thomas Paine and of "Common Sense," however, it was not until during this course that I really begin to see how this work was essentially influenced by the invention of the printing press and how his writings were another form of advertising since it pushed as propaganda against England. Americans stood up for their basic freedoms of speech, assembly, religion, and press during this time (Kovarik, pg.30). War times created the need for information to be spread faster which is why the U.S. Post was invented and inventors tried to create new ways of communication. While many failed, it was their collective work that helped lead to inventions such as the electric telegraph in 1837.

Not only did people need means communicate news fast, but people wanted to see what was happening in the world as well. In 1839, after years of studying and

experiments, Louis Jaques Daguerre created the first successful photographic process. Individuals like Roger Fenton took the advancements of photography and used photos of the camps and soldiers in the Crimean War to share with civilians what the war consisted of. When politics and war were growing in America, photographers like Matthew Brady started to document important figures and war which promoted these elements in ways people had not expected. His work of Lincoln helped sway votes in the 1860 election and by 1861 his violent and shocking photos of war advertised everything war consisted of. Others, like the Bergstressor Brothers, capitalized on the media by setting up photography studios in war times and selling photographs of soldiers before they went off to war.

One of the subjects that stood out the most to me during this course was the work and life of Cyrus Field. I never even thought twice of the cabling between America and other countries, but the ease of communication we have across the world is due to Cyrus Field. From watching "The World's First Transatlantic Cable : Documentary on the First Transatlantic Telegraph Cable" we saw that Field started as an apprentice and hardly knew anything about laying a transatlantic cable, all he knew is that he wanted to make it happen. Eventually, after asking several people and organizations for help, Field took off to lay the cable which ended up working, but was super slow and then it became weaker until it stopped altogether, Field became known as a failure.

The Board of Inquiry was established and Field had to explain himself and find what went wrong. Civil War broke out and while this project was halted, telegraphs showed how viable good communication was and once war was over, Field went back to project. By 1858, they traveled with the cable all on one ship, but still had to backtrack 40 miles when communication with Ireland stopped. When cable was fished out of the water, it had been pierced with nails, but they fixed it and the connection was back. Finally by 1866, the Transatlantic cable was laid working successfully which meant victory for Cyrus (Ferguson).

While the story of Cyrus Field may not seem entirely relevant to a career in film and advertising, it still struck me. Due to Field's perseverance, it is easy to access and communicate with people in other countries which means that the media I help produce everyday has a way to reach people across the world due to the foundation that Field

laid. As a producer and as an individual in the media/film industry, Field's story has taught me that it is okay to fail as long as I never stop trying.

It was the wars of the time, that caused a push for better and faster communication than even that of the telegraph. It was inventions like the telephone and basic radio communication invented by Marconi that changed the way people shared news and opinions. Even culture was explored more in depth through the art of photography done by Edward S Curtis who spent years of his life dedicated to Native American culture. Taking photos was only an art to few who could afford it until 1900 when the Kodak camera company came out with the "brownie" camera which made taking photos accessible to anyone who had a dollar. Their slogan "you push the button, we do the rest" captured how they marketed how a form of media that was once impossible and then expensive, became an art form anyone could be a part of.

By 1906 radio communication became public use which opened the doors to sharing news and opinions in a new fashion. Radio became popular and AT&T's WEAJ Station even began to offer 10 minutes of radio time to anyone who would pay \$100. Although censorship and restrictions began to come more into play with concepts like the Federal Radio Commission regulating that there were three classes of radio in with different frequency power and hours and based on what the station was about. The FRC was also in charge of issuing and revoking radio licenses at their will. By 1946 the Federal Communications Commission created the "Blue Book" report which outlined how radio was over commercialized, lacked service programming, and basic standards (Kovarik, pgs. 217-230).

In 1927, the first electronic television was invented by Philo Taylor Farnsworth, although there was debate over who owned the patent. With television, like that of photography, the public was able to visually see the events and information they had been hearing about. With American war involvement in the Second World War after 1941, the Office of War Information was formed to disseminate war propaganda. A seven series propaganda film that was commissioned by the U.S. titled "Why We Fight" to support Allied forces. By 1954, the American public was ready to be entertained and in some new ways, which led to late night television and game shows, as well as pre Recorded commercials that filled the stations. Steve Allen founded The Tonight Show

and television game shows became popular, although the game show Twenty-One was exposed for being scripted and the American public all felt manipulated once it was exposed. The television world was becoming filled with so much commercial programming that the FCC chairman gave a speech expressing how the programming was a vast wasteland. Although Minow felt that way, commercialization was not stopping. The cola wars began which consisted of several commercials and campaigns that would pin the Pepsi brand and the Coca-Cola brand against one another.

During the FCC television freeze between 1948 and 1952 there was only about 100 television stations on air. The FCC had to deliberate on the standard for color television, reservation of channel space for education, reduction of channel interference, the establishment of a national channel map, and the opening of additional spectrum space. These deliberations were meant to be done within six months, but with Korean War taking place, the freeze lasted four years. While it may not seem like a big deal now, at the time it seems a little insane to think that the national public only ever had access to 100 stations which did not leave much room for variety or a differing of opinions on matters or shows (pg. 240).

Meanwhile, the world of cinema quickly grew and changed. *Nosferatu* premiered and influenced the commercialization of Dracula and vampires. Other commercialization started when Walt Disney started his corporation in 1923, filling the world with that famous mouse. In 1927 the film *Sunrise* was also made which had dramatic lighting and expressionistic techniques to explore the story between a man and wife. It was movies like those and many others that started helping Studios to be known for having a certain look, like MGM, glossy, Paramount, glamour and Warner Brothers with a hard edge. (Storyworlds). Germany was different in the in the 1930s, Leni Riefenshahl was a director of Nazi Propaganda films which led many to assuming she was a Nazi supporter because of her art. Even the 1968 Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*'s would become influential enough to influence the naming of the iPod in 2001. Even with all the commercialization, film was still studying other aspects of psychology, like Tarkovsky's version of *Solaris* which explored the crisis of what it means to be human. By the late 70s, Francis Ford Coppola and Vittorio Storaro conveyed the limits filmmakers would go with their films when it came to sets, lighting, and expressing

emotion. Director Ziang Yimou explored themes of sexual repression and political oppression (Storyworlds),

We study these things to understand how the world that we live in today came to be. To learn of all those before us that made a difference in the world and how they did it. We study multimedia to learn from not only the achievements and great success stories, but also of the failures and mistakes of all that happened before. To understand how multimedia came to be and how any single form of media came to be, one must understand the foundations of any media was started hundreds of years ago by the inventors who wanted to explore more and share it with the world.

I have learned that multimedia is not just about multiple forms of media existing or being used at the same time, but it is more about the way that multimedia exists in the first place. It is one form of media that advances and causes the next for of media to come to life. Film was influenced by television that was influenced by radio and photography that was influenced by newspapers that were influenced by the printing press. The cause and effect has come from the past and gone on and on, it even keeps going towards the future.

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