

Session One--We Make Media and Media Make Us
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- I. The most basic observation of tool-making cultures: We shape tools and tools shape us.
- A. Aqueduct altered social structure (replacing the centrality of the well)
 - B. Roman Highways (permitted the administration and military defense of a large empire)
 - C. The violin was the most prominent instrument of the 18th and 19th centuries; electrical amplification caused the guitar to surpass it greatly in the 20th.
 - D. Shovels dig holes (and also make callouses)
 - E. Large academic budgets for IT suggest that IT is a valuable (perhaps the most valuable) aspect of education
 - F. “Long distance” communication suggests that proximity is neither valuable nor imperative, is this true (Incarnation? Why not just an email? “Who is my neighbor?”)?
- II. The tools we make both *reflect* us (and our values) and *shape* us
- III. We therefore ask of any tool (media or otherwise) *two* questions: What does it do *for* us, and what does it do *to* us? How does it alter the humane environment (“*media ecology*”)?
- IV. Any alteration in the tools by which humans communicate (i.e. media) will alter those who use them, promoting some aspects of our humanity and discouraging others.
- A. Media as McLuhan’s “extensions of man.” Every medium “extends” some aspect of our humanity (at the expense of others), e.g. the telephone “extends” the voice.
 - B. Neuro-genesis or “neuro-plasticity.” The brain continues to develop new neurological pathways throughout life. Six important “moments” of media are:
 1. Orality: promotes memory, and a consideration of sources.
 2. Manuscript: promotes communal discussion of (expensive and therefore culturally valuable) texts (rabbinic midrashim, Islamic commentary on the Qu’ran, the NT expression “it is written” (γράφεται, 67 times). It also creates the scribal class of labor. When codes replaces scroll, enormous changes in the organization of information takes place (table of contents, “pages,” indices. Eric Havelock, Walter Ong).
 3. Printing press: promotes individual (v. communal) study, while also creating a global community of scholars, and it promotes rationality and independent judgment (Elizabeth Eisenstein, Maryanne Wolf) at the expense of memory
 - a. Familiarity not understanding, e.g. Psa. 118:24 or “Mending Wall”
 - b. A memorized poem is understood differently than a read poem
 4. Images/Photograph: appeal to/cultivate emotion rather than reason (they are non-propositional, and must be “converted” to propositions in order to evaluate them), which is why propagandists (in our culture, commercial messages) prefer them (e.g. the wordless Nike ad)

5. Electronic media: alter the relation (and possibly even the concept) of distant/proximate; they are “space-biased”
6. Digital media: distract--they are literally alarming, and alter the ratio of alarming attention to executive attention.