Chapter 3
“Understanding Media in the Digital Age”
Comm 336 Mass Media Malaise Course
# Paper Books vs. Electronic Books

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<th>Pros of Traditional Books</th>
<th>What’s better about E-Books?</th>
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The Importance of Books

- The book is the oldest and most respected medium without which civilization as we know it could not have developed.

- For hundreds of years books in their traditional form have been the most important means by which we:
  - Preserve our culture
  - Transmit to the next generation
  - Communicate important new ideas to millions of readers

- For these reasons, whatever their future, books need to be understood in terms of:
  - Where they came from
  - The form in which they exist today
  - What they may be like in the decades ahead

- The fact that they not only survived for many centuries but also prospered in the face of increasingly sophisticated competing media is one indicator of their importance.

- Books continue to be widely read and used for a variety of purposes in contemporary society:
  - Entertainment
  - Principal repository of our culture
  - Guides to our technical knowledge
  - Source of teaching on so many subjects
  - Basic reference to religious doctrines
  - Books can promote powerful ideas and inspire great changes—even revolutions
  - They can persuade the influential, bringing new policies and solutions to problems
  - Book censorship over the centuries indicates the power and influence of books as a mass media
Books as a Mass Medium

- Books do fit our definition of “mass media” as defined in Chapter 1:
  - Their “messages” are prepared and encoded by professional communicators
  - Books are normally transmitted to relatively large and diverse audiences

- Distinct Book Characteristics:
  - Because they can take a year or more to produce, books are less timely than other print media (newspapers and magazines)
  - Differ too in that books are bound and covered and are meant to be kept and preserved - they have permanence
  - Such durability means that books can last longer than any other print medium - a feature that lends itself to in-depth, long-lasting exploration and development of topics or ideas
  - Books, like movies, are not heavily supported by advertising - they have to earn profits for their producers based on their sale as content and as physical objects
The Evolution of Writing

To understand how books began, we need to first look at the origins of writing.

A “medium” - a graphic representation of an idea, unlike speaking - was the first breakthrough.

A medium is a device by which a sender can move physical information through time or space in such a way that one or more people can receive the information and decipher the sender’s intended meanings.

Man’s first medium in this way began with cave paintings - humans seem to have an innate desire to tell stories, to share experiences and information in ways other than verbally.

About six thousand years ago people began to leave records in the form of codified writing than can be understood today.

This system, today called “ideographic” (thought writing) or “pictograph” writing involved using pictures to convey meaning.

But as this expanded, there were no ways to draw many words, so began linking sounds, not thoughts or ideas, to graphic symbols.

Thus began early “alphabet” writing.

The development of alphabets, like books and printing, ranks as one of the greatest human achievement.
Books over the Ages: The Four Transitions

1. Books as scrolls
   - Philosophers, religious leaders, scientists and others wanted ways to record their thoughts, views, findings, etc.
   - Government and military leaders needed ways to stabilize the order and make rules and laws more uniformly understood often across vast lands.
   - Egyptians are credited with developing the first paper-papyrus in 3000 B.C. - it was a light, thin surface made by pounding thin layers of reeds that grew by the Nile River.
   - Parchment and vellum, both made from animal skins, were other ways to create scrolls.

2. Books with bound pages
   - Romans are credited with cutting pages to uniform size, and binding them all together.
   - They also introduced punctuation, paragraphs, upper and lowercase, grammatical structure.
   - At Christian monasteries monks hand-copied thousands of “manuscript” or handwritten books.
   - The Chinese, meantime, had developed “paper” and ways to manufacture it in quantity.

3. Printed books
   - In 1455 Johannes Gutenberg of Germany had developed “movable type” and began printing books in quantity - The Bible being the first mass produced book.
   - Suitable inks were developed as was an efficient way to press blank pages against the ink type.
   - Guttenberg’s techniques were so simple and practical that they remained in use for hundreds of years.
   - The influence of this advance on Western Civilization - it spurred, among other things, the advancement of education - was on a par with the impact computers had in the 20th century’s last decades.

4. The digital future of books
   - The future of books seems bright today, but how we read them is the big question - as well as how they will be produced, stored, sold and distributed.
Digital Age Impact on the Book World

Changes in Bookselling

- Book retailing via the WWW has already simplified book purchasing for those who are online
- The great success story of Amazon as an online book retailer (and other products)
- “Brick and mortar” stores though have and continue to fall by the wayside
- Survivors will have to do both- maintain large inventories on hand and also have effective online systems for selling books

Electronic Publishing and Reading

- Readers certainly have more options for book reading today
  - Traditional bound books bought at bookstores and other retail outlets
  - Order traditional books online that are mailed to their homes
    - More of these may be “books on demand” single printed copies that avoid the expense of large printing costs, inventories and storage space needs
  - Reading books digitally with tablets readers such as Kindles, iPads, Nooks
Types/Categories of Books

- Trade
- Textbooks
- Children’s
- Reference
- Technical and Scientific
- Law
- Medical
Today’s Book Publishing Process

 Publishers

 Today act as a sort of impresario - a manager who brings together and coordinates a complex team including authors, editors, designers, compositors, printers, and booksellers

 Authors

 Publishers rely on authors because they must have a continuing flow of new manuscripts to process and sell
 Authors are often paid “royalties” - an agreed-upon small percentage of the publisher’s earnings from selling books to retailers, rather than wages
 “Advances” may be paid to authors and others to secure exclusivity to a certain publisher - money that is usually deducted from royalties once the book starts to sell
 Textbook writing not as lucrative, normally no advances, just royalties

 Agents

 In the trade book world, authors normally work with literary agents who act as middlemen between authors and publishers, helping authors find publishers and representing authors in negotiations with publishers
 Agents are paid by authors, on average receiving 15 percent of the author’s royalties

 Editors - an author, agent or editor may initiate the idea for a trade book; once a publisher receives the author’s manuscript, several kinds of editors get involved:

 - Acquisitions editors - generate ideas for books and seek able/willing authors; evaluate quality and sale potential of manuscripts
 - Developmental editors - help authors organize books and pitch effectively to publishers
 - Copy editors - check spelling, grammar, facts, proofs (preliminary printed pages)

 Production Staff

 Publishers hire outside companies called “compositors” to set the manuscript into a type for printing
 Freelancers can be brought in to arrange graphics, photos, design covers, etc.
 Publishers also contract with printers and binders to physically produce books

 Sales Staff

 Sales reps from the publishing company persuade independent booksellers to carry the company’s books, school boards to adopt them, or college faculty to assign to their students