THE BAYLOR UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES & THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION PRESENT

2014 BAYLOR LIBRARIES SYMPOSIUM

UNDERSTANDING

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF MARSHALL McLuhan’s GROUNDBREAKING WORK

SYMPOSIUM ABSTRACTS

SEPTEMBER 25-26, 2014
MARRS-MCLEAN SCIENCE BUILDING & JONES LIBRARY, ROOM 200 ON THE BAYLOR UNIVERSITY CAMPUS
FEATURING

KEYNOTE LECTURE
DR. PAUL LEVINSON

SESSION PRESENTERS
LAUREN BARRON, M.D.
DR. TREY CADE
MELINDA JOYCE CREECH
DR. PAUL GRABOW
DR. HOPE KOCH
ELENA MARIE LOPEZ
DR. BYRON NEWBERRY
DR. JACQUELINE-BETHEL MOUGOUE
DR. JEFFREY OLAFSEN
DR. LINDA J. OLAFSEN
DR. SAM PERRY
DR. STEPHEN BROCK REID
DR. GRETCHEN ELLEN SCHWARZ

CLOSING LECTURE
DR. RICHARD DIEST
**KEYNOTE LECTURE**

“The Medium of the Book: Fifty Years after Understanding Media”  
Dr. Paul Levinson, Professor of Communication and Media Studies, Fordham University

A half century after the publication of McLuhan’s Understanding Media seems like a good time to examine the recent evolution of the book itself as a medium. In Understanding Media, McLuhan quotes the French poet Alphonse de Lamartine’s circa 1830 observation that “the book arrives too late”. Today, in a revolution as important as the introduction of Gutenberg’s press, books can arrive instantly anywhere in the world via Kindles and other eBooks. But the most significant part of this development may pertain not to readers but authors, who can now can publish books without a publisher and within an hour or less after the book has been written. The advantages and disadvantages of this bypassing of the traditional gatekeeper for authors and the world at large will be explored — they are mostly advantages — as well as the decline of gatekeeping in other media. Current conflicts, such as the dispute between Amazon and the traditional publisher Hachette will be examined. Connections between the evolution of the book and other facets of writing on the Web will be traced, including the capacity of readers to communicate directly and easily with authors, in modes akin to the “intelligent writing” that Socrates yearned for in the Phaedrus.

**CLOSING LECTURE**

“No Medium, No Message”  
Dr. Richard Dienst, Associate Professor of English, Rutgers University

I propose to read Marshall McLuhan’s Understanding Media alongside a book also published in 1964: Gesture and Speech (Le Geste et la parole) by André Leroi-Gourhan. Both books offer sweeping accounts of the relationship between technology and human beings across millennia. Both forecast a future in which media and technical systems of ever greater complexity circumscribe our existential and historical situation. In comparing these two books, I will aim to draw theoretical, pedagogical, and political lessons about how we can live with the machines we have made.
“Robert Browning at ‘Downton Abbey’: Social Media at the Armstrong Browning Library”

Melinda Joyce Creech, Doctoral Candidate in English, Baylor University

Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning optimized social media available in the nineteenth century by writing thousands of letters. The Armstrong Browning Library (ABL) seeks to preserve the Brownings' use of social media by collecting, preserving, and digitally presenting almost four thousand of those letters. The ABL is also utilizing contemporary social media to fulfill its mission to acquire, preserve, and provide access for effective use of research materials promoting opportunities for study, appreciation, and understanding of the Brownings and the wider field of nineteenth-century literature and culture by the Baylor community, the larger academic community, and the general public.

My experience as a graduate assistant at the ABL has provided opportunities to employ social media, particularly blogs, to help the library achieve its mission. In the fall of 2012 I joined the army of Downton Abbey fans. Watching “The Secrets of Highclere Castle,” a historical account of Highclere, the real “Downton Abbey,” which aired as a prequel to the first episode of the third season, I recognized Lord Carnarvon’s name as a Browning correspondent. I wondered if Robert Browning had ever visited “Downton Abbey.” A bit of research revealed that, in fact, Browning was often a welcome Highclere visitor. I wrote several blogs gleaning facts from Browning’s letters and finding unusual parallels. The blogs drew a total of 2,017 unique visitors: 1,359 from Texas, 1,740 from the United States, and others from as far away as the UK and New Zealand.

I contacted the archivist for Highclere Castle, who found that there were three previously unrecorded Browning letters among the archives at the castle, a photograph of Robert Browning, and Browning’s signature in the guest book of the castle, clarifying some dates in his chronology. Lord Carnarvon allowed the ABL to receive digital copies of these items, and we shared our Highclere Castle letters with them.

In spring 2013 I curated another exhibit, “Giving Nineteenth Century Women a Voice and a Face.” The exhibit drew from our 19th Century Women Writers Collection to present texts and images of twenty-three women. To reinforce and extend the exhibit, I blogged about each woman, contacting scholars in the field for their input. As a result of the blog many scholars responded and several have visited the ABL to do further research with our materials. An undergraduate class in British literature extended the exhibit under my direction and posted additional blogs about women writers.
“Radio Broadcasts and Print Media: The Use of ‘Old Fashioned’ Media in the Classroom”
Dr. Jacqueline Bethel Mougoue, Assistant Professor of History, Baylor University

Newspapers and radio broadcasts do not primarily function as “old fashioned” media, but are tangible sources of knowledge in a media-saturated world in which Twitter, Wikipedia, and Facebook are increasingly deemed as the only reputable sources of academic knowledge. Hence, new media and technologies function as indispensable vehicles to accessing “old” media that helps students traverse the space between past and present. In my paper, I will examine the importance of using radio and print media, such as newspapers, as a useful dialogue with the historical past within the classroom. This approach provides students with the opportunity to better connect to historical characters, cultures, and events. Additionally, students are motivated to familiarize themselves with a variety of historical viewpoints and to evaluate the foundation upon which historical narratives rest. Equally important, students are pushed to think in terms of multiple causes and global interactions and to challenge many of the “traditional histories” which fail to integrate factors such as gender, ethnicity, or religion. For instance, Internet accessed archival radio clips from a black-oriented programming service, the National Negro Network, can reveal first-hand differing perspectives about the socio-political climate in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, students’ historical knowledge expands beyond words on a textbook and they can better envision (and hear) the historical context of key moments in history.

“McLuhan, Faith, and Teacher Education”
Dr. Gretchen Ellen Schwarz, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction, Baylor University

Not everyone realizes that Marshall McLuhan was a man of faith. Moreover, reading McLuhan remains a challenge as the many interpretations of his work reflect—was he a techno-determinist and critic of mass culture, a modernist literacy critic, an enthusiastic prophet of cyberculture, or what? McLuhan’s scholarship has not been easily accessible. Increasingly, however, scholars are paying attention to McLuhan as a Catholic convert, some considering him a “Christian apologist disguised as a media theorist” (Inchausti, 2012, p. 136). He certainly was not a teacher educator, and yet his insights are also relevant to the contemporary state of teacher education, a state in peril even in Christian universities. How can McLuhan shed light on teacher education?

Teacher education is undergoing considerable criticism and mandated change today. Teacher educators struggle under growing pressures. The chore of attaining national accreditation through CAEP (Council for Accreditation of Education Professionals) remains onerous—and of questionable value. In addition, others are suggesting alternatives to college teacher preparation such as Teach for America and the New Schools Venture Fund. As McLuhan observed in Understanding Media, the power of the media is great, not only in content but in how messages are communicated. How have the media portrayed teacher education and why? What are the implications for teacher educators and others?

At the heart of this paper is a media analysis of a video, posted on YouTube, of a speech given by Arne Duncan, the Secretary of Education, on teacher education at a national conference in 2011. The analysis is based on several of the Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages recommended by the National Association of Media Literacy Education, a group that takes McLuhan seriously:

1. Who paid for this media message and why?
2. What does this want me to think (or think about)?
3. How do the techniques communicate the message?
4. What is left out that might be important to know?

This analysis concludes with some thoughts about the influence of McLuhan and some of those he has impacted in media literacy education (such as Neil Postman) and what these ideas might mean specifically for teacher education among Christians.

“Memory, Creativity, and Media as an Extension of the Human Mind”
Dr. Stephen Breck Reid, Professor of Christian Scriptures, George W. Truett Seminary

How do media as an extension of the human mind inform pedagogy for someone teaching biblical Hebrew and the literature of the Hebrew Bible? What is biblical literacy? How will we encounter biblical Hebrew and Greek? This event celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of Marshall McLuhan’s book Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (1964). In order to better understand this book one must place it in the context of the Gutenberg Galaxy (1962), the Medium is the Massage (1967), as well as other pioneers in new media such as Douglas Engelbart. All of these writings work from the premise that media can work as an extension of human intelligence and creativity. The question they do not address is how much memory does the human have to bring to the creative enterprise.

Biblical literacy in the world of old media meant that the person memorized major quotations and their location in the Bible. The infrastructure for memorization was found in religious institutions. Congregations had vacation Bible school and sword drills that rewarded those who had memorized the most biblical data. Those who did not have the benefits of the ecclesiastical infrastructure seldom develop a repertoire of biblical literacy do not overcome this gap in college or seminary generally. Now a person need only type a portion of the passage into a search engine such as Bing, Yahoo or Google and you will be told where the passage can be found.

The mid-twentieth century biblical Hebrew grammar mandated memorization of vocabulary and each element of the verb paradigm. More recent Hebrew grammars reduce the necessary memorization to a minimum. However, even this minimum has been called into question. In light of media as an extension of the human mind in the area of biblical
Hebrew the question of how much memorization is necessary arises. Today three software packages dominate Biblical research, Accordance, BibleWorks and Logos. Breakthroughs in computers and telephones that are small computers make it possible translate and parse every word. These are but a few of the New Media pioneers.

This paper will begin with review what McLuhan and the early pioneers of new media foresaw and how it informs pedagogy in biblical Hebrew and biblical literacy. Then it will explore how memory fuels creativity in the application of media as an extension of human creativity.

CONNECTIONS

“Placing Texts in Contexts in Light of McLuhan”
Dr. Sam Perry, Assistant Professor, Baylor Interdisciplinary Core

Since the claim “The medium is the message,” first found voice in Marshall McLuhan’s Understanding Media, there has been debate over what exactly the phrase means or even what it could mean. After all, messages change and mediums certainly change and evolve over time. Despite confusion regarding the claim’s meaning and its potentialities for media studies, it nonetheless became axiomatic, and ubiquitous to the point that anyone who took an Introduction to Mass Media class at some point in their college career has likely abused the claim or twisted it into a sophistic knot that obscures the importance of both the content of a message and the significance of the medium which carries it. Mark Federman claims misinterpretations of McLuhan often lead people to, “jump to the mistaken conclusion that, somehow, the channel supersedes the content in importance, or that McLuhan was saying that the information content should be ignored as inconsequential.” Like Federman, I find this reading of McLuhan to be problematic, and see McLuhan’s axiom more along the lines of the warnings provided us by Socrates in Plato’s Phaedrus. Socrates laments the possible deleterious effects of writing on the Athenian citizenship, just as McLuhan offered words of caution about attending to the ways in which media might change the relationship of the message to its channel and thereby its relationship to the senders and receivers of those messages.

Even this distillation of McLuhan proves a bit simplistic. In this presentation, I set about thinking what McLuhan’s claim means for rhetorical criticism and what it means for academics and critics of any stripe who seek to place a particular text or set of texts within a particular context. Just as Socrates noted that the complexion of democracy in Athens would change with advent of writing, so too did McLuhan note the complexion of modern society would change with the increased presence of film and television as the primary media by which people received information. The current public sphere is inundated with new mediums, and we too should take note of how social media, streaming media, MOOCs, and other new mediums potentially change our respective messages. I take note of this through examining the ways in which our (Baylor Interdisciplinary Core) first year writing and speaking curriculum, which includes readings from both Plato and McLuhan, evidences some of these changes.

“Social Media’s Workplace Impact”
Dr. Hope Koch, Associate Professor of Information Systems, Baylor University

In Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, McLuhan probes how new media changes society. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter impact both our social lives and our work lives. This panel presentation will discuss social media’s impact in the workplace by sharing insights from a multi-year case study conducted at USAA. USAA implemented an internal social networking site, which it calls its internal Facebook, to help new employees connect with the organization. The social networking site allows new hires to blend their personal and work lives. New hires can use the social networking site to engage in activities during the work day. Activities include playing, (e.g., scheduling table tennis matches), socializing, learning new things, and supporting one another (e.g., encouraging, consoling and cheering).

Boundary theory suggests that this blending of one’s work and social life can create role conflict (Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). For example, a mother responding to work texts while she is coaching her child’s soccer practice. Contrary to boundary theory, this research shows that blending work life and social life can have positive impacts. Most of this study’s new hires were engaged in tedious, technical jobs developing computer applications. The social networking system offered respite. Using the broaden and build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2004) as a framework, this research shows that workplace social media use can create positive emotions which then generate personal resources. Resources are physical, social, intellectual and psychological.

Furthermore, this research illustrates McLuhan’s proposition that the same media may transform different societies in different ways. In this study, the social networking system affected middle managers and executives in different ways. While the social media site left the new hires feeling good, middle managers felt isolated and marginalized, since the social networking system afforded new hires opportunities unavailable to middle managers. Executive were circumspect. They recognized the system’s socialization benefit and positive impact on turnover, but they wanted the new hires to use the social media system for more work-related activities.

These findings offer practical implications for organizations wanting to implement social media in the workplace and theoretical implications. Most psychological and information systems research focuses on negative emotions and our work bring insight into playfulness in the workplace.

“Retribalization in the Digital Age: Integration in the ‘Global Village’”
Elena Marie Lopez, Doctoral Candidate in Curriculum and Teaching, Baylor University

Marshall McLuhan stated one consequence of the printing press was increased nationalism. In Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man, McLuhan asserted the electronic age has conversely retribalized man. Through retribalization our once divisive
The EMR is here to stay. How can our awareness of the message in this medium help us to shape this technology for the betterment rather than the detriment of the medical encounter? Are there ways of utilizing this medium to enhance the well being of individual patients, the "health of the healthcare system" at large, not to mention the satisfaction of medical professionals? This paper is an attempt to suggest habits and practical strategies that can influence the development and evolution of EMRs in an effort to ensure that medicine is more about meaning than machines.

**TECHNOLOGY**

"Longing for the Past – Hoping for the Future: Technological Disruption"

Dr. Byron Newberry, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Baylor University

The disruptive power of technology is a central theme pervading Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man. "The new media and technologies by which we amplify and extend ourselves," writes McLuhan, "constitute huge collective surgery carried out on the social body with complete disregard for antiseptics." New technologies cause "change and collapse", alter ratios, and restructure relationship among people and things, all of which serve to create "psychic stress". To use the vocabulary of critic Neil Postman, technological change is ecological. Each new technological extension of man is a new organism introduced into the environment, upsetting the previous balance and causing fluctuations that dampen only when a new equilibrium is reached. New technologies render old occupations obsolete even as they create new ones. They promote new social values, but also desecrate old ones. They foster new modes of living that tend to undermine previous ways. Many people, if not most, says McLuhan, cope with these disruptions via somnambulism, taken as a numbed, uncritical embrace of the dynamic technological world. This is a notion later expanded upon by critic Langdon Winner.

But some people experience disruption more acutely and more viscerally. They may therefore seek to blunt that experience by retreating to either the past or future. "[T]hese two uniform ways of backward and forward looking are habitual ways of avoiding the discontinuities of present experience," writes McLuhan. From simple nostalgia to radical rejection (backwards), or from hopeful optimism to utopian striving (forwards), people's efforts to escape the present in one direction or another lie along a spectrum ranging from wishful thinking to militant action. In this presentation, we will explore some of the ways in which these behaviors of futurism and archaism, along with somnambulism, manifest themselves in the contemporary world.
“Reflections on Open Sourcing of Raw Data”
Dr. Jeffrey Olafsen, Associate Professor of Physics, Baylor University

Agencies such as the National Science Foundation have moved in the last few years to require scientists to make available to the public their research data, broadly defined as anything an investigator would need to reproduce their published results. This policy would not have been possible before the advent of the Internet and the recently more affordable price of large digital storage repositories.

As with any technological innovation, there are repercussions that will propagate from this decision, not all of which were necessarily intended by the policy. While there are manifest intentions of the policy that are meant to benefit the broader research community and speak to issues of ethics and increased connectivity for the sharing of information, there are latent questions with which the scientific community and the academy will have to contend.

The latent issues with this policy will clearly change long standing established norms within the scientific community on the subjects of intellectual property, the authorship of derivative works in science, as well as credit toward tenure and promotion within the academy. It is my intention with this presentation to initiate a conversation about these questions.

“Complex Systems”
Dr. Paul Grabow, Professor of Computer Science, Baylor University

The “extension” of the self is a dominant theme in McLuhan’s (1911-1980) Understanding Media, in which “all technologies are extensions of our physical being”. His discussion of “extension of consciousness” via “electric technology” was prophetic, whereby “the entire business of man becomes learning and knowing” and “all forms of wealth result from the movement of information”. The net result is a “total field of inclusive awareness” where we are both aware and affected by things outside of us -- as part of a large, complex, system.

In Technology & Justice, Grant (1918-1988) wrote that “... modern technology is not simply an extension of human making ... but is a new account of what it is to know and to make in which both activities are changed ...”, where “... technology is the pervasive mode of being in our political and social lives”. In other words, technology has permeated the whole of society. This too can be regarded as a large, complex system.

Both writers recognized that technology simplifies this complex system to conform to its assumptions and goals. Consequently, the system often behaves badly. “Even specialist learning in higher education proceeds by ignoring interrelationships; for such complex awareness slows down the achieving of expertness” (McLuhan). And “… technology ... tends to pare down the actual novelness of our situation, so that we are not allowed to contemplate that situation for what it is” (Grant). In other words, the messy (often, human) elements are simplified to fit the assumptions and goals of organizational structure, terminology, or methods. Unfortunately, neither writer addresses how to deal with this oversimplification.

Nassim Taleb (b 1960) suggests that a complex system should be seen for what it is (volatile and random) and not what we often imagine it to be (stable and deterministic). In particular, he advocates making decisions (and building systems) that are antifragile, i.e., capable of benefiting from random events, errors, and volatility. He also warns against cause-effect predictions with complex systems, recognizing that “… the notion of cause itself is suspect; it is either nearly impossible to detect or not really defined.” The presentation will sketch some concepts from Taleb for problems described by McLuhan and Grant.

“Revealing Content in the Infrared Using Semiconductor and Laser Media”
Dr. Linda J. Olafsen, Science Teacher, Live Oak Classical School

When Marshall McLuhan published Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man in 1964, technology such as the laser and the semiconductor diode were in their infancy. One of the prominent examples used by McLuhan was the light bulb, which he designated in his work as a medium without content. Because of great progress in the development and understanding of materials, imaging, and related technology over the past 50 years, there have been significant advances in light sources beyond the incandescent bulb that impact global communications and other vital applications, particularly those related to sensing or imaging that consequently reveal content. This presentation will highlight how lasers, semiconductors, semiconductor lasers and other sources function not solely as media, but also how they act to reveal content, particularly in the context of research involving semiconductor heterostructures designed and built to operate in the mid-infrared portion of the electromagnetic spectrum. While infrared wavelengths of light are longer than the human eye can see, these wavelengths enable sensing of molecules and heat and reveal critical “content” or properties of materials or surrounding environment.

“Media as a Space Weather Sensor”
William Trey Cade, Assistant Research Professor and Director, Baylor Institute for Air Science

Since the earliest days of media, it has been more than just a means of communicating information. Long range transmission of information – the backbone of media – has also been a means to learn something about our environment. Shortly after the first global media system, the telegraph, was implemented in the 1840’s, it was learned that this system could be disrupted by the aurora borealis, or “northern lights.” Later, as radio became used for both global and regional communication, its disruption came to be linked with solar flares and magnetic storms. These disruptions to communication eventually lead to an understanding of what we now call “space weather,” which is the science of how
emissions from the sun interact with the earth and the earth’s near-space environment. Even today, the signals used for satellite communication, an essential element in almost all aspects of media transmission, are used to actively monitor space weather conditions. As the complexity of transmitting media information has increased, we have learned that the workings of the media itself has the side benefit of giving us information about the earth’s environment – a truly unexpected example of “the media is the message.”
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