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Media and change

Media technology is developing at an unfathomable rate and has massive implications for the way we communicate and interact with each other. The emergence of new media technology has always had far-reaching social, economic, political and legal implications. It is accompanied by great promise and also great fear.

The increasing availability of media technology means that ordinary people have the opportunity to create and distribute their own media texts, challenging the very notion of the mass media and upending a paradigm that has existed since the advent of the printing press.



2.1 A brief history of the mass media

To understand the mass media, it's necessary to understand the history of mass communication.



FIGURE 2.1.1 Johannes Gutenberg

1453 Johannes Gutenberg (see Figure 2.1.1) develops the moveable type printing press. The development of the printing press and the wider availability of education led to increasing levels of literacy across Europe, sparking the Renaissance and marking the first step towards an information society.

1556 *Notizie Scritte*, a monthly publication by the Venetian government, becomes one of the earliest newspapers to be published in Europe.

1785 *The Times* is first published in London. It wasn't until the eighteenth century that newspapers became more frequent publications.

1870 The introduction of pulp-based paper leads to the widespread publication of newspapers, books and so-called 'penny dreadfuls'.

1906 The first (silent) feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, is made in Australia.

1921 Radio station KDKA in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, USA makes its first national broadcast. Within a decade, the wireless becomes a household item, redefining the way that people receive news and entertainment and introducing the concept of broadcasting.

1927 Major film studios work together to introduce sound to motion pictures, leading to the widespread success of 'talkies'. *The Jazz Singer* is the first feature film to have dialogue.

1956 The first television broadcast is made in Australia (see Figure 2.1.2). Television soon spreads to the entire country. Popular programs in the early days of Australian television include *Bandstand*, *Six O'Clock Rock* and *In Melbourne Tonight*.



FIGURE 2.1.2 People watching television, circa 1956

1975 Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* hits theatres, becoming the first film to take more than US\$100 million at the box office and spawning a new era of blockbuster films.

1975 The MITS Altair 8800, a microcomputer available in kit form and consisting of little more than a series of flashing LEDs, starts the personal computer revolution.

1977 Apple releases the Apple II, one of the earliest personal computers. Companies start mass-producing video players, sparking a war between rival formats VHS and Betamax.

1977 George Lucas's *Star Wars* hits theatres.

1978 *Space Invaders*, the arcade game designed by Tomohiro Nishikado, is released (see Figure 2.1.3).



FIGURE 2.1.3 Space Invaders

1979 Sony releases the Walkman TPS-L2, which helps the sale of cassette tapes to eventually eclipse LP records.

1981 MTV is launched in the USA. The first music video broadcast on the new network is 'Video Killed the Radio Star' by The Buggles.

1982 Billy Joel's *52nd Street* is the first album released on CD.

1983 Nintendo releases the Nintendo Entertainment System in Japan.

1984 Apple releases the Macintosh computer (see Figure 2.1.4).



FIGURE 2.1.4 The Macintosh computer

1993 Mosaic, one of the earliest web browsers is released, leading to increased use of the World Wide Web.

1994 The Sony Playstation is released in Japan.

1995 Microsoft releases the web browser, Internet Explorer.

1995 Amazon opens its virtual doors for business.

1997 *Twister* is the first Hollywood film released on DVD.

1997 Larry Page and Sergey Brin register google.com as a domain name for their search engine, previously called BackRub.

1999 The peer-to-peer file sharing system Napster is released.

2001 Napster shuts down its servers, complying with an injunction to stop distributing copyrighted music.

2001 Microsoft releases the Xbox in the USA.

2003 MySpace is launched.

2003 Steam, a digital distribution service for videos games, is launched.

2004 Google indexes 6 billion items, including 4.28 billion webpages.

2004 The term Web 2.0 is widely used to describe the way websites incorporate greater interactivity, sociability and user-generated content.

2004 Facebook is launched.

2004 Blizzard Entertainment releases *World of Warcraft*, which will become the world's largest 'massively multiplayer online role-playing game', with more than 11 million subscribers.

2005 YouTube is launched.

2005 Microsoft launches the Xbox 360.

2006 The first Blu-ray titles are released, including *The Fifth Element* and *The Terminator*.

2006 Sony launches the PS3 (PlayStation 3).

2007 Apple launches the iPhone (see Figure 2.1.5).



FIGURE 2.1.5 The iPhone is the first smartphone to appear on the market.

2007 Netflix ships its billionth DVD and starts an online, video-streaming service.

2007 Microsoft launches OneDrive. In the following years, cloud storage becomes the norm with competitors Dropbox and Google Drive entering the market.

2007 Google enters the smartphone market, launching the Android.

2007 Amazon launches the Kindle e-book reader.

2008 Google indexes 1 trillion URLs.

2008 Google releases the first public version of the Android.

2008 Spotify launches their online music-streaming service.

2010 James Cameron's *Avatar* becomes the first film to earn more than \$2 billion.

2010 Apple's iTunes store sells 10 billion songs.

2010 Apple releases the iPad.

2010 WikiLeaks launches the Afghanistan war files.

2010 Social networking app Instagram is launched.

2011 The first version of Snapchat is launched.

2011 Apple introduces the personal assistant, Siri.

2013 The first documents from NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden are published in *The Guardian*, detailing the extent of the USA's mass surveillance program.

2013 Sony releases the PS4 and Microsoft announces the Xbox One, ushering in a new generation of console gaming.

2013 Google launches the Chromecast video-streaming device.

2013 Samsung releases its first-generation smartwatch, the Samsung Gear. Wearable smart devices are becoming more common.

2014 Microsoft and Amazon launch their own personal assistants, Cortana and Alexa, in competition with Siri.

2014 Sarah Koenig releases the first episode of *Serial*, a podcast cited as sparking a podcasting renaissance.

2015 Apple launched its smartwatch, Apple Watch. By this stage other companies, such as Fitbit and Misfit, are offering a range of wearable devices compatible with smartphones.

2015 Wikipedia's English language edition reaches 5 million articles.

2015 Australian streaming service Stan, a collaboration between Nine Entertainment and Fairfax Media, is launched.

2015 The Apple Music streaming service is launched in 100 countries.

2015 Live streaming app Periscope is launched.

2016 Facebook launches Facebook Live, which allows people to stream live content directly from their smartphones.

2016 Oculus Rift, one of the earliest mass market virtual reality headsets, is launched. Later that year, Sony releases the PlayStation VR headset in what is touted as the coming of age for virtual reality (see Figure 2.1.6).



FIGURE 2.1.6 The PlayStation VR headset

Learning activities

- 1 The invention of moveable type was a significant step forward in the development of mass communication. Who had the power to distribute information to the masses in the early days of the media?
- 2 The rise of Web 2.0 has changed the way that people interact with the mass media. How is this different to the days when television, radio and print were the most widely used forms of media?
- 3 The television is an iconic image of the twentieth century. Based on what is currently available, which form of media do you think will become an iconic image of the twenty-first century? Explain your answer.
- 4 Identify the top ten most important mass communication developments in the timeline and briefly explain the reasons for your choice.
- 5 Brainstorm a list of new media technologies, including hardware, software or any other form of new communication technology that you can think of.
- 6 Identify five developments or changes that have occurred in the mass media during the last twelve months that might have a significant impact on the way people communicate. Think about important developments in hardware, software and the way that traditional forms of media are adapting to or accommodating these changes.

Don't touch that dial!

A HISTORY OF MEDIA TECHNOLOGY SCARES, FROM THE PRINTING PRESS TO FACEBOOK

Respected Swiss scientist Conrad Gessner might have been the first to raise the alarm about the effects of information overload. In a landmark book, he described how the modern world overwhelmed people with data and that this overabundance was both 'confusing and harmful' to the mind. The media now echo his concerns with reports on the unprecedented risks of living in an 'always on' digital environment. It's worth noting that Gessner, for his part, never once used e-mail and was completely ignorant about computers. That's not because he was a technophobe but because he died in 1565. His warnings referred to the seemingly unmanageable flood of information unleashed by the printing press.

Worries about information overload are as old as information itself, with each generation reimagining the dangerous impacts of technology on mind and brain. From a historical perspective, what strikes home is not the evolution of these social concerns, but their similarity from one century to the next, to the point where they arrive anew with little having changed except the label.

These concerns stretch back to the birth of literacy itself. In parallel with modern concerns about children's overuse of technology, Socrates famously warned against writing because it would 'create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories'. He also

advised that children can't distinguish fantasy from reality, so parents should only allow them to hear wholesome allegories and not 'improper' tales, lest their development go astray. The Socratic warning has been repeated many times since: The older generation warns against a new technology and bemoans that society is abandoning the 'wholesome' media it grew up with, seemingly unaware that this same technology was considered to be harmful when first introduced.

Gessner's anxieties over psychological strain arose when he set about the task of compiling an index of every available book in the 16th century, eventually published as the *Bibliotheca Universalis*. Similar concerns arose in the 18th century, when newspapers became more common. The French statesman Malesherbes railed against the fashion for getting news from the printed page, arguing that it socially isolated readers and detracted from the spiritually uplifting group practice of getting news from the pulpit. A hundred years later, as literacy became essential and schools were widely introduced, the curmudgeons turned against education for being unnatural and a risk to mental health. An 1883 article in the weekly medical journal the *Sanitarian* argued that schools 'exhaust the children's brains and nervous systems with complex and multiple studies, and ruin their bodies by protracted imprisonment'.

Meanwhile, excessive study was considered a leading cause of madness by the medical community.

When radio arrived, we discovered yet another scourge of the young: The wireless was accused of distracting children from reading and diminishing performance in school, both of which were now considered to be appropriate and wholesome. In 1936, the music magazine the *Gramophone* reported that children had ‘developed the habit of dividing attention between the humdrum preparation of their school assignments and the compelling excitement of the loudspeaker’ and described how the radio programs were disturbing the balance of their excitable minds. The television caused widespread concern as well: Media historian Ellen Wartella has noted how ‘opponents voiced concerns about how television might hurt radio, conversation, reading, and the patterns of family living and result in the further vulgarization of American culture’.

By the end of the 20th century, personal computers had entered our homes, the Internet was a global phenomenon, and almost identical worries were widely broadcast through chilling headlines: CNN reported that ‘Email “hurts IQ more than pot”’, *The Telegraph* that ‘Twitter and Facebook could harm moral values’ and the ‘Facebook and MySpace generation “cannot form relationships”’, and the *Daily Mail* ran a piece on ‘How using Facebook could raise your risk of cancer’. Not a single shred of evidence underlies these stories, but they make headlines across the world because they echo our recurrent fears about new technology.

These fears have also appeared in feature articles for more serious publications: Nicolas Carr’s influential article ‘Is Google making us stupid?’ for *The Atlantic* suggested the Internet was sapping our attention and stunting our reasoning; the *Times of London* article ‘Warning: brain overload’ said digital technology is damaging our ability to empathize; and a piece in the *New York Times* titled ‘The lure of data: is it addictive?’ raised the question of whether technology could be causing attention deficit disorder. All of these pieces have one thing in common—they mention not one study on how digital technology is affecting the mind and brain. They tell anecdotes about people who believe they can no longer concentrate, talk to scientists doing peripherally related work, and that’s it. Imagine if the situation in Afghanistan were discussed in a similar way. You could write 4000 words for a major media outlet without ever mentioning a relevant fact about the war. Instead, you’d base your thesis on the opinions of your friends and the guy down the street who works in the kebab shop. He’s actually from Turkey, but it’s all the same, though, isn’t it?

There is, in fact, a host of research that directly tackles these issues. To date, studies suggest there is no consistent evidence that the Internet causes mental problems. If anything, the data show that people who use social networking sites actually tend to have better offline social lives, while those who play computer games are better than nongamers at absorbing and reacting to information with no loss of accuracy or increased impulsiveness. In contrast, the accumulation of many years of evidence suggests that heavy television viewing does appear to have a negative effect on our health and our ability to concentrate. We almost never hear about these sorts of studies anymore because television is old hat, technology scares need to be novel, and evidence that something is safe just doesn’t make the grade in the shock-horror media agenda.

The writer Douglas Adams (see Figure 2.1.7) observed how technology that existed when we were born seems normal, anything that is developed before we turn 35 is exciting, and whatever comes after that is treated with suspicion. This is not to say all media technologies are harmless, and



FIGURE 2.1.7 UK author Douglas Adams

I’ve come up with a set of rules that describe our reactions to technologies:

- 1 Anything that is in the world when you’re born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
- 2 Anything that’s invented between when you’re 15 and 35 is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
- 3 Anything invented after you’re 35 is against the natural order of things.

The Salmon of Doubt, Douglas Adams, 2003

there is an important debate to be had about how new developments affect our bodies and minds. But history has shown that we rarely consider these effects in anything except the most superficial terms because our suspicions get the better of us. In retrospect, the debates about whether schooling dulls the brain or whether newspapers damage the fabric of society seem peculiar, but our children will undoubtedly feel the same about the technology scares we entertain now.

It won't be long until they start the cycle anew.

Vaughan Bell, *Slate Magazine*, 15 February 2010.
Vaughan Bell is a clinical and neuropsychologist at the Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia, and King's College London.

Learning activities

- 1 Identify five past or present concerns about media technology mentioned in the 'Don't touch that dial!' article.
- 2 In your own words, describe the term 'moral panic'? Do you believe that people's moral concerns about the effect of media technology are justified or over-exaggerated? Explain your answer.
- 3 Choose five recent news stories from the technology sections of national, state or local print or web-based newspapers and briefly summarise the technology focus and any issues that arise from the technology being highlighted in the articles.
- 4 Create a short video or podcast about the way media consumption has changed. Identify someone from your parent's generation or older and interview them about their patterns of media consumption. Use the following questions as a starting point:
 - What types of media did you use for entertainment when you were growing up?
 - How was this technology different to what you use today?
 - How did you obtain news and information when you were younger?
 - How do you obtain news and information now?
 - What is your favourite form of new media technology? Why?
 - Is there anything you miss about obsolete forms of media or technology?

Edit the responses together and share them with your class.

ANALYSING MEDIA CHANGE

Assessing the impact of media technology is challenging. The media has complex and far-reaching implications for peoples' lives. The rate of technological development means that change often occurs quickly. The implications of this change quickly become accepted as normal or natural by-products of media use. Given the dynamic and disruptive nature of new media, the following framework is a useful way to consider the impact media technology has on peoples' lives while avoiding any superficial moral panic. The framework asks you to consider new media in terms of industry, culture, economy, audience, government, ethics, society. You can remember these factors with the acronym ICEAGES.

INDUSTRY

Technology drives the way the mass media operates, produces texts and reaches audiences. In the last two decades, technology has changed the news media irrevocably. The rise of the internet has challenged traditional print publications, gouging circulation and sales figures. In response, newspapers have moved online and explored other sources of revenue including pay walls, online advertising and sponsorship. Traditional newspapers have also started providing more than just news stories, often including video and audio content in their stories. The internet has also fundamentally changed the way audiences get news and information. When considering the impact that new technology might have on established industries, always pay attention to the way it affects media production and distribution.

CULTURE

New technology invariably redefines art and entertainment, providing new opportunities for self-expression. The widespread adoption of DVDs, for example, allowed audiences to 'binge watch' entire seasons of television at once. Alongside the development of cable channels in the USA, this technology led to the rise of long-form storytelling and acclaimed television dramas like *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*. New media technology has also led to a creative and cultural revolution that has put the means of production into the hands of audiences. With little more than a mobile phone and internet connection, ordinary people now have the ability to create film that can be distributed to millions. When analysing the impact of new media forms, always consider how these new platforms and technologies allow people to create, consume and share culture.

ECONOMY

The dynamic and disruptive potential of new media technology is evident in the economic changes that have occurred in recent years. New media technologies have presented economic opportunities and challenges for existing industries. At the turn of the century, the music industry was faced with the challenge of dealing with digital downloads. Increasing internet speed and peer-to-peer file sharing meant that people were able to easily pirate and share music with each other. While this proved challenging for the record industry, it provided unsigned artists with a way to circumvent the industry and share music directly with fans. While the rise of music streaming was initially regarded as a threat to the music industry, profits from streaming services have surged. At the end of 2016, record company Warner Music reported a \$3.25 billion profit, their highest in eight years. Almost a third of the profits came from streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music. Always consider the economic possibilities of new media and the challenges it might pose to existing businesses.

AUDIENCE

Before the turn of the century, large corporations who operated in the traditional forms of television, radio and print dominated the mass media. Audiences were largely consumers of this material. The rise of the internet and the falling cost of technology has significantly changed the relationship between media and audiences. Audiences now have the potential to create and share their own content, challenging a paradigm that has existed since the advent of the printing press. When you are reflecting on the implications of new media, always consider how it changes the way audiences consume, create and communicate.

GOVERNMENT

Governments often struggle to keep up with technological change. New media technology often presents legal and regulatory problems for governments. In Australia, for example, the rise of online app stores and video-sharing sites has challenged the system of traditional media regulation. The Classification Board has traditionally provided ratings for all video games. However, the overwhelming number of video games now available means that the government has been forced to explore other options for classifying content, including international, industry-based age-rating systems. Similarly the development of new media forms often challenges

regulations that governments might have regarding media ownership and operation. Digital media also provides new opportunities for online activism, changing the very nature of our democracy. When addressing the change occurring thanks to new media technology, always consider its legal, regulatory and political implications.

ETHICS

Ethics are the moral principles that guide behaviour. Because new media changes the way that people interact, it invariably poses ethical challenges for audiences and industry. Large corporations, such as Facebook and Google, encounter ethical issues regarding their operation, including their responsibility to curb bullying and hate speech, respect the privacy of users and monitor the accuracy of news. Audiences themselves face similar ethical issues, including their treatment of other users, sharing inappropriate content and the construction of their online identities. When thinking about new media technology, always consider the ethical issues that might arise.

SOCIETY

Media technology is integral to the way audiences communicate and socialise. Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Reddit provide opportunities for people to connect with others and form online communities. The introduction of new hardware and software will continue to influence the way people interact with each other. When thinking about a new media platform or technology, consider how it changes the way audiences communicate, interact and socialise.

Learning activity

With a partner, select a form of new media or media technology.

- Use a search engine to find articles about this form of new media technology that have been published in the last two years.
- Organise what you learn about the implications of this form of new media or technology under the following headings: audience, society, economy, industry, government, culture and ethics.
- Share your results with the class.

2.2 Copyright and change

The media is a multibillion-dollar industry. It makes sense that laws have developed to protect the work of creative individuals. Copyright laws, intellectual property, remixing, mashing up and sharing are areas of significant contention and change.

COPYRIGHT LAWS

The question of how intellectual property can be protected when copying and sharing files via the internet is a relatively easy exercise poses a significant challenge for copyright laws.

In his book *Free Culture* academic and attorney Lawrence Lessig argues that copyright laws exist largely to protect existing industries and do not benefit creativity:

The burden of this law now vastly outweighs any original benefit—certainly as it affects noncommercial creativity, and increasingly as it affects commercial creativity as well ... the law's role is less and less to support creativity, and more and more to protect certain industries against competition. Just at the time digital technology could unleash an extraordinary range of commercial and noncommercial creativity, the law burdens this creativity with insanely complex and vague rules and with the threat of obscenely severe penalties.

DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Digital rights management (DRM) is a way to control the way digital files are used. Most platforms that sell or stream digital content use DRM to restrict unauthorised copying of digital works. DRM encrypts files to prevent them from being duplicated or accessed on other formats. For example, a song that has been purchased on one platform may be restricted so that it can only be played on that platform or associated device.

While companies are keen to use DRM to protect their intellectual property, this sort of encryption has its share of critics. Cory Doctorow, digital rights activist and author, argues that DRM is a threat to security, privacy, public rights and innovation and has been to the detriment of artists and freedom of speech. In 2015, Doctorow and the Electronic Frontiers Foundation joined forces to seek to put an end to DRM and the legal structures that support it. They argued that the success of an information society depends on digital content being accessible. They explained that DRM

locks information behind electronic barriers and hinders the development of a rich public domain of information that can be used by educators, researchers and people around the world.

THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF COPYRIGHT

Established and highly profitable industries have argued in favour of existing copyright laws to protect the work of artists and the revenue that flows towards these industries. At the 2014 Australian International Movie Convention, actor John Jarrat argued passionately about piracy and its impact on Australian film:

It's fatal at the moment and it's going to kill the Australian film industry—there's no doubt about that—very, very shortly and within the next few years. There's a cure to this cancer, and it's simply buy your entertainment like you have to buy everything else in this world. You're not supposed to take things for nothing and steal from people and take their livelihood.

THE CREATIVE COMMONS MOVEMENT

The Creative Commons project was developed to allow people to share and reuse copyright material in a manner that is legal and consistent with the rules of copyright. Creative Commons is not an alternative to existing copyright laws. Rather, it works alongside them. As a movement, Creative Commons gives people greater freedom to manage their copyright works. Someone who releases a song under a Creative Commons licence, for example, is able to share that song and is granting permission for other people to reuse the work or adapt it, provided that attribution is given to the original copyright holder.

CREATIVE COMMONS WEBSITES

Creative Commons websites are rich sources of photographs, video and audio. Sharing your work on social media sites like Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo often requires having copyright clearance for any third-party material that you use. Given that getting clearance for music can often be a difficult and expensive process, it's a good idea to see what you can find at notable Creative Commons websites. Most Creative Commons licences allow you to reuse, remix and share material with little more than an attribution of the original author.

- Incompetech is a website that was established by composer Kevin McCloud. The site features dozens of compositions in a range of genres that can be used in videos or other works.
- Bensound is a site created and maintained by composer Benjamin Tissot. It features a range of tracks in genres such as jazz, rock, electronica and folk music.
- Freesound, an initiative of the Music Technology Group of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, is a vast collection of sound effects licensed under Creative Commons.
- Pexels is a website of stock images that are distributed via Creative Commons Zero (CC0) licences, which means that the original creators have no copyright over their work, allowing you to use it for free.

COPYRIGHT AND PATENT CLASHES

The tension between creation and copyright has led to high-profile legal battles between artists, corporations and copyright holders:

- 1991: Rapper Biz Markie sampled a ten-second loop from the song 'Alone Again' by Gilbert O'Sullivan (see Figure 2.2.1). The subsequent legal battle incited by Grand Upright Music who represented O'Sullivan resulted in an out-of-court settlement and the song was removed from the record. This case had an enormous impact on hip hop artists who had previously borrowed liberally from other tracks, necessitating that they receive clearance for all samples.

- 1994: Apple launched legal action against Microsoft for copying the graphical user interface used on their Macintosh computers. During the case, Microsoft argued that Apple had initially stolen the idea for a graphical user interface from Xerox. The judge ultimately ruled that the desktop metaphor used in a graphical user interface could not be protected under copyright law. Three years later the two companies resolved to end the agreement.



FIGURE 2.2.1 Biz Markie was a rapper who was embroiled in a copyright clash for sampling parts of a well-known song.

- 2007: Viacom launched a \$1 billion legal action against Google, the owner of YouTube, for violating the copyright of programs like *South Park* and *The Daily Show*. The case was in court for six years and the judge ultimately ruled in favour of YouTube because it did not encourage its users to upload infringing content.
- 2008: The television program *Spicks and Specks* broadcast a segment pointing out the similarities between the iconic flute riff in Men at Work's 'Down Under' and the children's song 'Kookaburra'. Larrakin Music, who owned the rights to 'Kookaburra', sued Men at Work for copyright infringement. The presiding judge ruled that copyright had been violated and the band was forced to pay five per cent of the royalties they had earned since 2002.
- 2011: Apple launched legal action against Samsung for violating patents related to the operation of its smartphones. The legal battle between the two companies included fifty cases across nineteen countries.

Everything is a Remix

Everything is a Remix (2015) is a documentary by Kirby Ferguson exploring the nature of creativity and appropriation. It examines the creative process, explaining how artists have always copied, transformed and combined elements of past works to create new and original ones.

In the documentary, Ferguson cites *Star Wars* as an example of a work that remixes and reinterprets elements from other films. During its production, director George Lucas was influenced by countless films including *Flash Gordon* (1980), *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *Dam Busters* (1955). The droid C3PO was directly influenced by a robot from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*. The scene in which Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) returns home to discover that his aunt and uncle have been murdered by Imperial troops directly references a similar scene in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) when Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) returns to discover his brother's family have been killed and the farm is in flames.

Culture, according to Ferguson, is similar to biological evolution. Instead of the copy, transformation and combination of genes, however, culture involves the reproduction and recombination of ideas, behaviours or skills. 'The interdependence of our creativity has been obscured by powerful cultural ideas, but technology is now exposing this connectedness,' he says. 'We're struggling legally, ethically and artistically to deal with these implications.'

We operate in a legal system that doesn't acknowledge the derivative nature of creativity. There is considerable tension between intellectual property, copyright laws and remix culture. Ferguson points out that, for much of history, ideas have been free. Copyright was initially developed to ensure that creators saw a return on the development of their work, which would subsequently revert to the public domain. More recent laws and trade agreements are based on the notion that ideas are property and should be protected. So-called 'sample trolls' and 'patent trolls' are organisations that aggressively take legal action for even minor infringements of copyright laws.

Learning activities

- 1 Watch the documentary *Everything is a Remix*.
- 2 As you are watching it, take notes on remix culture and copyright. Combine your notes using a collaborative document or wiki.
- 3 Use these notes to record a short video blog on the topic 'Remixing is an essential part of creation'.

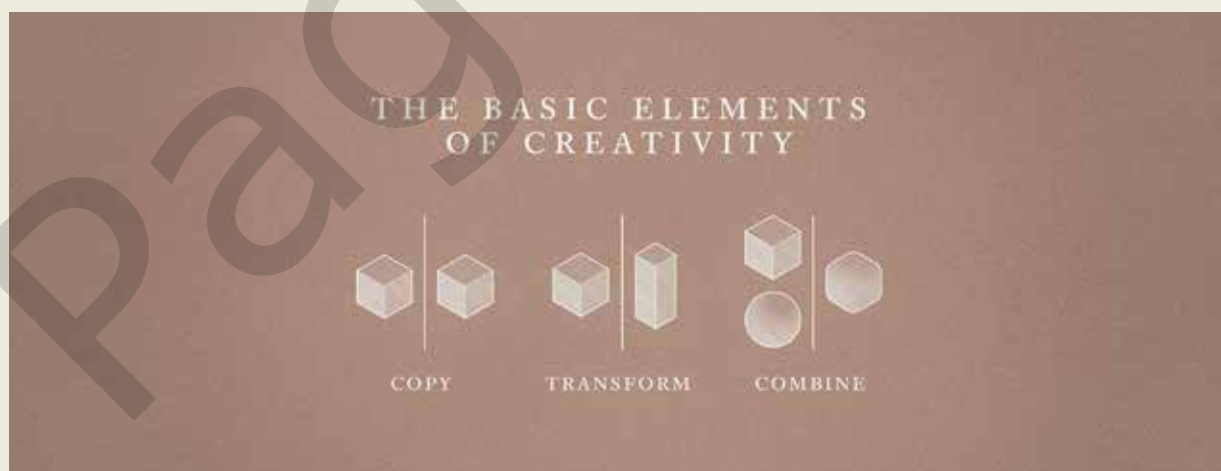


FIGURE 2.2.2 The basic elements of creativity. In his documentary *Everything is a Remix* (2015) Kirby Ferguson argues that all creative endeavour involves a process of copying, transforming and combining different codes and conventions

2.3 Social networking

Since the turn of the century, social networking has become an integral part of the way people communicate and share information.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

The development of social networking websites such as Facebook and Instagram has altered the way that people communicate and interact with each other. However, even before social networking websites became popular, the internet was used for social interaction, with people chatting online and swapping ideas and information.

In 2002, social networking started to reach a critical mass. The rise of Web 2.0 meant that more and more people were delving into the online world. Friendster was one of the first social networking websites to offer the functionality that users have come to expect from sites like Facebook, allowing people to publish content, add friends and send messages to each other. Within several months, Friendster had attracted over 3 million users—the potential of this new medium was obvious.

The launch of Myspace in 2003 brought social networking into the mainstream as users signed up to interact with their friends and their favourite musicians. By November 2005, Myspace boasted 26.7 million users and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation purchased it for US\$580 million. By the end of 2008, Facebook had eclipsed Myspace as the largest social networking website on the internet with 200 million unique users. By 2016, this figure had reached 1.79 billion.

Given the dominance of Facebook, rival social networking services have attempted to provide different experiences for users. Instagram became popular thanks to its exclusive focus on images and videos. Snapchat's temporary images and stories gave users a different experience. Twitter has continued to endure with its focus on 140-character microblogging.

Regardless of platform, social networking has transformed the way that we communicate with friends, family, celebrities and elected officials.

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND PRIVACY

With the increased use of social networking websites, never has the way people communicate been so public. In giving people the power to publish and share content, issues surrounding privacy have surfaced, with users expressing concerns that their private details are being exposed or shared among undesired networks. The other side of the privacy argument is that the internet is, by its very nature, a public forum and users of social networking websites should only publish information that they are comfortable sharing with a potentially wide and diverse audience.

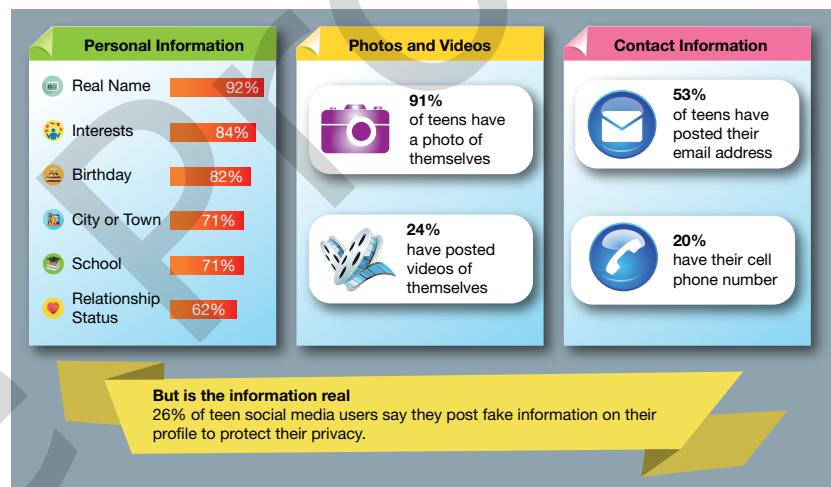


FIGURE 2.3.1 What teens share on social media in the USA. Source: Pew Resource Centre

Learning activity

Find the terms and conditions for two popular social networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram. In your own words, describe what they say about:

- the intellectual property of material that you post
- your responsibilities when using the social network
- who your information will be shared with.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking allows its users an unprecedented ability to connect with friends and family. The benefits of social networking for teenagers are well documented. In a 2011 literature review titled 'The benefits of social networking', researchers from the Inspire Foundation, Murdoch University and the University of Western Sydney documented the positive impact that social media can have on the lives of teenagers.

- **Media literacy:** The use of social media results in higher levels of media literacy, which involves not only technical skills but also a critical understanding about information and its credibility. Interaction with social media is more likely to develop in its users an understanding of how to create and share content, including images and video.
- **Informal knowledge and skills:** While schools and universities are leveraging social media to engage learners, the use of social media also promotes the independent development of knowledge and skills. While using social media, teenagers often engage in collaboration and self-directed learning using a variety of platforms and services—everything from Wikipedia to YouTube.
- **Creativity:** Social media also encourages creativity as users become involved in blogging, photography, animation, video production and podcasting.
- **Connecting with peers:** Prominent social media researcher and academic Dana Boyd has written extensively about how social media allows teenagers to connect with their peers. In 'Why youth (heart) social network sites' she explains how teens use social media to 'hang out' with friends, develop a sense of identity, learn social cues and negotiate public life.
- **Strengthening friendships:** Considerable research has also found that social media allows teens to form stronger friendships. In the real world there are often barriers to hanging out with friends, which might include access to transport or the availability of safe spaces to gather. Social media overcomes these barriers and gives teenagers the opportunity to socialise any time they want to.

- **Creating new friendships:** According to the report, social media allows teens to form friendships based on mutual interests or values. These types of friendships are particularly valued by teenagers who suffer from illness or disability who may find it difficult to form friendships offline.
- **Community:** Social media allows people not only to strengthen real-world communities but also to form new groups based on shared interests. People might, for example, form online communities based on a shared love of popular culture, such as films or television.
- **Political engagement:** Social media provides opportunities for teenagers to become aware of social and political issues and also become involved in lobbying governments and corporations to achieve change.
- **Wellbeing:** The report argues that research into social media indicates that the combined effect of its impact on media literacy, learning, creativity, connectivity, friendship, community and political engagement has a positive influence on teenagers' overall wellbeing.

Critics of social networking have suggested that this technology might actually result in social isolation. A 2013 study at the University of Michigan titled 'Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults' found that increased use of social networking results in a reduced sense of wellbeing.

SELFIES, REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY

The rise of social network resulted in selfies becoming a normalised ways of people representing themselves. The construction of a selfie reflects a great deal about your personality and how you want to be perceived. Some theorists suggest that these representations are empowering, others argue that they simply perpetuate the stereotypes found in mainstream media.

In 2014, *TIME* published an article by Jessica Bennett titled 'Our bodies, our selfies: the feminist photo revolution'. In the article, Bennett argues that young women are empowered by social media to redefine what is beautiful and resist traditional representations of gender and body image. In contrast, Erin Gloria Ryan at *Jezebel* argues that selfies merely perpetuate the idea that appearance is what matters most about women. She argues that most selfies don't celebrate achievement, empowerment or success, usually focusing exclusively on the face.



FIGURE 2.3.2 According to the *Salon* article 'This is your brain on selfies', the average millennial will take about 25,000 selfies in their lifetime.

Although selfies provide the promise of empowerment, these representations are still subject to the pull of mainstream media images. In a 2015 study titled 'How gender-stereotypical are selfies? A content analysis and comparison with magazine adverts', Nicola Doring, Anne Reif and Sandra Poeschl studied a random sample of 500 selfies uploaded to Instagram by both men and women. The photographs were analysed using a set of gender display categories developed by Erving Goffman. Goffman argued that women in advertisements are often described as passive, powerless and submissive through their posture and body language. The study found that selfies of both men and women not only reflected stereotypical representation of gender but were more prevalent in selfies than in traditional advertising.

AUDIENCE AS PRODUCT

Social networking is big business. By 2016, Facebook was worth US\$350 billion, Instagram was worth US\$35 billion and Twitter weighed in at US\$23 billion. Given that these companies provide their products for free, users often don't think about how these tech behemoths make money. Like broadcast television and newspapers before them, the audience is the product, which is sold to advertisers. In the case of social networking, however, these companies have a very detailed picture of users thanks to the flood of information that they provide every day.

Social networking sites know your name, gender, location, likes, dislikes, friends, family and political beliefs and can build up a detailed understanding of your personality by

analysing what you post, like and share. This information is then used to provide companies with targeted advertising.

In 2013, media theorist and author Douglas Rushkoff announced that he was leaving Facebook. In an article titled 'Why I'm leaving Facebook' he wrote:

Facebook does not exist to help us make friends, but to turn our network of connections, brand preferences, and activities over time—our 'social graphs'—into a commodity for others to exploit. We Facebook users have been building a treasure lode of big data that government and corporate researchers have been mining to predict and influence what we buy and whom we vote for. We have been handing over to them vast quantities of information about ourselves and our friends, loved ones and acquaintances. With this information, Facebook and the 'big data' research firms purchasing their data predict still more things about us—from our future product purchases or sexual orientation to our likelihood for civil disobedience or even terrorism.

The information you give social networks feeds into algorithms that curate your social media experience, ensuring you will return and continue using the service.

ONLINE HARASSMENT

As social media has spread, there have been a number of high-profile online harassment cases. Gamergate was an online hate movement targeting prominent female game developers and journalists, notably Zoë Quinn, Brianna Wu and Anita Sarkeesian. Following Kotaku's allegedly biased reviews of her game *Depression Quest*, Zoë Quinn received ongoing harassment via social media including a death threat and rape threats. The Gamergate hashtag and hatred spread under the pretence of addressing political correctness and integrity in gaming journalism. Game developer Brianna Wu also became a target of online harassment after she weighed into the debate surrounding the issue. Anita Sarkeesian—who examines the problematic representation of women in popular culture through her YouTube series *Tropes vs Women*—also became a target of this campaign of online harassment. Social media sites have been slow to address these issues of harassment. It wasn't until 2016 that Twitter allowed users to mute posts based on hashtags, emojis and keywords.

GENERATION LIKE

Generation Like (2014), a documentary produced by Douglas Rushkoff and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), explores the corporations and economic structures that underpin social networking. In 2001, Rushkoff produced a documentary called *Merchants of Cool* (2001), which explains how large corporations like MTV were profiting from teenage culture, exploiting kids' desire to be cool. Social media has changed this dynamic and teenagers now control much of this discourse. Rushkoff argued that likes, shares and retweets are the social currency of 'Generation Like'. What people like and share online becomes part of their social identity.

The documentary points out that young people have always wanted attention and validation and internet fame has become a way to attain social currency. It also looks at how social marketing firms use social media to orchestrate publicity campaigns where the audience advertises content for them.

In the documentary, Jane Buckingham, president of trend-forecasting company Trendera, points out that consumers are now taking on the role of marketers by promoting products to each other. The documentary argues that, for *Generation Like*, abandoning your core values or ethos in return for corporate sponsorship isn't a concern. Receiving sponsorship from a corporation is seen as an endorsement or indication that you have achieved success.

Kids take the very marketing techniques that have been used on them and use them on one another, all in pursuit of the same prize. It's the paradox of *Generation Like*. These kids are empowered to express themselves as never before but with tools that are embedded with values of their own.

Learning activities

- 1 Watch the documentary *Generation Like*.
- 2 Describe three ways that teenagers may use social networking to their advantage.
- 3 Describe three ways that teenagers might be exploited by large businesses in the course of their social networking activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

Social media represents considerable promise when it comes to achieving social change. The accessibility and immediacy of communication means that it is easier than ever to spread information about social issues and mobilise support for important causes.

Critics have argued that blogs and social networking websites might not be the best way to mobilise support for important social and political causes. Traditional forms of activism, such as writing to elected officials or conducting demonstrations, are usually more effective than simply joining groups on social networking websites or posting on a blog. While this may indicate support for a cause, it is not necessarily the most effective way to achieve social change. For this reason, activism through social media has been dubbed 'slacktivism'.

Athina Karatzogianni, a lecturer at the University of Leicester, is more optimistic about the impact of social media on activism:

Digital activism has transformed political protest in the last two decades. Smartphones and the internet have changed the way political events, protests and movements are organised, helping to mobilise thousands of new supporters to a diverse range of causes. With such activity becoming an everyday occurrence, new forms of digital activism are now emerging. These often bypass the existing world of politics, social movements and campaigning. Instead, they take advantage of new technologies to provide an alternative way of organising society and the economy.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

- Arab Spring: In 2009 members of the Iranian democratic movement embraced Twitter as a platform to share information and communicate with the outside world. Thousands of users across the globe gave their avatars a green overlay to signify their support for the democratic movement.
- SOPA: In 2012 the *Stop Online Piracy Act* (SOPA) was due to be introduced to the United States Congress. The proposed laws were perceived to threaten freedom of speech and freedom of expression on the internet. Prominent websites including Wikipedia, Reddit and Google went dark for twenty-four hours to protest the

legislation. Millions of people contacted their local representatives and the United States Congress to express their opposition to the bill. A petition ran by Google attracted 4.5 million signatures. The bill was subsequently abandoned.

- **Kony 2012:** Kony 2012 (see Figure 2.3.3) is an online video created by a group of activists aiming to have Ugandan war criminal Joseph Kony arrested. Kony is the leader of a guerrilla organisation called the Lord's Resistance Army, which is responsible for crimes including rape, murder, kidnapping and the forced recruitment of child soldiers. The video was a phenomenal viral success. In less than a week, it was viewed more than twenty-five million times, throwing the international spotlight on Joseph Kony.



FIGURE 2.3.3 Young people pasting up a billboard of the Kony 2012 campaign



FIGURE 2.3.4 US citizens protesting in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign

- **Black Lives Matter:** In 2013, the hashtag 'blacklivesmatter' started on Twitter in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman who shot and killed unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin after an altercation in a gated community (see Figure 2.3.4). In 2014 the hashtag drew considerable attention to the fatal shooting of young African-American man Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Its use across social networks fuelled the protests that ensued.

Learning activities

- 1 Have you ever used social networking websites to spread or support a social or political message?
- 2 How effective do you think social networking websites are as agents of social and political change?

2.4 Data and change

The rise of the internet means that vast collections of data are now held by governments, corporations and other organisations. The existence of this data has challenged privacy, questioned the ethical responsibilities of corporations, undermined the authority of governments and provided another avenue of social change with the advent of 'hacktivism'.

DATA MINING

The data held by corporations and governments includes massive amounts of information about users, such as their names, addresses, friends, family, browsing histories and spending habits.

Many governments and city councils around the world are making the vast amounts of data that they collect and store available to the public via the internet. The purpose of making this data available is twofold. First, it aims to increase the transparency and accountability of government bodies. Second, it gives ordinary people the opportunity to use this information in new and creative ways.

In 2013, the Australian Government launched the website data.gov.au. The site aims to provide Australians with access to public databases that can be used to develop tools that will improve the lives of its citizens. It provides access to over 23,000 databases that include datasets on a range of topics, such as airport traffic data, recycling collection, energy ratings, electoral boundaries and the location of public toilets. The hope is that access to this information will empower people to create their own sites and apps that make use of this data in creative ways to the benefit of others.

MASS SURVEILLANCE

The internet, social media and mobile devices have created new opportunities for governments to monitor their citizens. Countries like the USA and the United Kingdom are using these technologies to monitor their citizens in an attempt to prevent terrorism and other crimes. Their governments store and monitor all communications, including text messages, emails and telephone calls.

In 2013 by Edward Snowden (see Figure 2.4.1), a former employee of both the Central Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency, leaked thousands of classified documents to the media revealing the extent of the US Government's global surveillance programs.

The documents showed that the NSA harvests and stores massive amounts of information from around the world, including emails, videos, photos, and social networking information. According to Glen Greenwald, a journalist with *The Guardian* newspaper who helped to break the story, even low-level analysts and contractors within the NSA can access this information without a search warrant.

The NSA can collect information not only about suspects but also anyone considered to be 'three hops' from their target. Given that the average Facebook user has 190 friends, this means the NSA can keep under surveillance the 5 million people in their extended network.

According to Snowden, even encrypted data is not safe. The NSA has cracked much of the encryption people use on a day-to-day basis and it is permitted to store all enciphered communication until it can be cracked, even if a person has not committed a crime.

The NSA has also developed the technology to record every single telephone call in a foreign country and store that information for thirty days. Although the program, codenamed MYSTIC, was initially used to monitor a single country, there are reports that the government is expanding its reach.

Advocates of mass surveillance point out the need to monitor and stop potential terrorist activities. Civil libertarians argue that this sort of surveillance, which occurs despite any proof of guilt, is a violation of privacy. They argue that politicians, law enforcement, government employees or even hackers could abuse this information.



FIGURE 2.4.1 Whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed the extent of the US Government's mass surveillance program.

CITIZENFOUR

Citizenfour (2014) is an Academy Award–winning documentary by Laura Poitras. The documentary is based around an exclusive interview with Edward Snowden prior to the release of his evidence about the NSA’s mass surveillance program. Snowden invited Poitras and *The Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald to a hotel room in Hong Kong as the story was released to the press. The interview with Snowden was conducted as the story broke across the world. Before his passport was cancelled, Snowden fled to Moscow and was ultimately granted asylum in Russia. In the documentary, Snowden claimed that the surveillance program run by the NSA was one of the biggest weapons of oppression in the history of humankind.

Learning activities

- 1 Watch the documentary *Citizenfour*.
- 2 Make a list of the surveillance techniques used by governments to monitor their citizens.
- 3 With a partner, describe the advantages and disadvantages of this form of mass surveillance.

WIKILEAKS

WikiLeaks is a non-profit website that publishes leaked documents from governments and corporations from whistleblowers within these organisations. The website features a searchable database of these documents that includes diplomatic communications, political emails and military documents. The site has been involved in a number of high-profile leaks, notably those of US soldier, Chelsea Manning, who leaked almost 500,000 documents related to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In 2010, the website released classified footage from the Iraq War in which a US Apache helicopter opens fire on two Reuters journalists whose cameras were mistakenly identified as guns.

Wikileaks has been both praised and condemned for the publication of these documents. Those who praised it maintained that the site has increased government accountability and shed light on illegal and dubious activity. Those who condemned it argued that the American public and American military personnel were placed at risk.

The media landscape is changing, allowing whistleblowers to release massive amounts of information directly and anonymously to the public. WikiLeaks has worked with



FIGURE 2.4.2 A masked hacker, part of the Anonymous group, hacks the French presidential Elysée Palace website on 20 January 2012

traditional print publications, including *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, to analyse, curate and coordinate the release of secret documents. According to the site’s cofounder Daniel Domscheit-Berg, WikiLeaks has published more confidential information since its inception than *The Washington Post* has in the last thirty years. New technology—including state-of-the-art encryption, peer-to-peer file sharing, restricted mailing lists, memory sticks, VPN tunnels and the internet itself—is at the heart of these changes, making it possible for whistleblowers, WikiLeaks and newspapers to release this information.

HACKTIVISM

Online communities of hackers have started to disrupt mainstream media, governments and corporations by compromising servers and hacking data. ‘Anonymous’ is the most notable network of hackers. A loose collective without central leadership or direction, the group has instigated a number of high-profile hacks on organisations such as The Church of Scientology, Westboro Baptist Church and Sony. An offshoot of Anonymous, Ghost Patrol, has started targeting ISIS websites and online accounts. The organisation frequently posts videos online in which members wear Guy Fawkes masks from the film *V for Vendetta* (2005). Anonymous frequently uses ‘denial of service attacks’ in which websites are temporarily taken down by large amounts of traffic. These tactics mirror traditional campaigns of civil disobedience to bring public attention to causes the organisation sees as important.

2.5 Creativity and change

New media technology has opened up enormous potential for creativity and creation. Creating media products, such as films or video games, was traditionally only possible if you had access to equipment that was expensive and difficult to use. Over the last decade, there has been a significant shift in the production of mass media since the invention of moveable type.

THE CREATIVE REVOLUTION

For several hundred years, the ability to publish and broadcast has largely been in the hands of the wealthy. Now, with little more than a smartphone and internet connection, you can share your work with millions of people. While many regard the democratisation of media as a cultural revolution, some worry about its impact on the very nature of creativity and art.

This creative revolution was sparked by the development of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a phrase invented by writer Tim O'Reilly that describes the way the internet has evolved to incorporate greater interactivity, socialisation and user-generated content. In the early days of the internet, websites were typically static and lacked interactivity. The arrival of blogs, wikis and sites such as YouTube and Facebook allow ordinary people the freedom to create and distribute their own media texts.

Media theorist Henry Jenkins has dubbed this 'participatory culture'. According to Jenkins, participatory culture is an environment in which there are few barriers to artistic expression and the creation of content. People work together in a collaborative and supportive environment where they share knowledge and skills and value the contributions of others.

Technology, according to Jenkins, is simply a tool. While it makes certain creative endeavours possible, these will only become widespread if the culture supports it. He argues that many young people are already involved in participatory culture through their affiliation with online communities, the creation of new media products and collaborations via new media.

Learning activities

- 1 Make a list of the technology that you have access to and can draw upon to create your own media.
- 2 Describe the different types of media that you create and share.

THE RISE OF YOUTUBE

While traditional media organisations have struggled to make sense of the new digital landscape, ordinary people have been quick to adopt new technologies to create, collaborate, publish, share and monetise their work. YouTube provides an outlet for lesser known filmmakers, musicians and comedians who want to share their work with a large audience.

In 2006, the Sydney-based band Sick Puppies received global attention when the video clip for their song 'All the Same' became a viral hit on YouTube. The clip featured footage of the lead singer's friend Juan Mann offering free hugs to strangers in a busy Sydney shopping strip. The video was featured on *Good Morning America* and has received over 65 million views on YouTube.

Through its affiliate program, YouTube has allowed creators to monetise their videos and profit from views. This has been very profitable for some independent filmmakers and artists. Natalie Tran, who publishes videos under the name communitychannel, is one of the most prominent Australian vloggers on YouTube. She produces short, humorous videos about her day-to-day life, often playing multiple characters. By 2017, her videos had received over 500 million views. PewDiePie is a Swedish vlogger whose video game playthrough series Let's Play developed a strong fan base thanks to his humorous commentaries. By 2017, he had amassed over 52 million subscribers and 14.2 billion views.

SHORT VIDEO GENRES

The development of online video-sharing sites like YouTube and Facebook has seen the development of a whole range of new, short-form video genres that carry their own conventions.

- vlogs: A 'vlog' or 'video blog' is traditionally an unscripted, direct-to-camera confessional in which someone talks about their life, an issue or idea that is important to them. Given that they are unscripted, vlogs usually make liberal use of jump cuts without making any attempt to cover up these abrupt transitions.

- sketches: Given the typical length of YouTube videos, it has become an ideal platform for sharing sketch comedy. Channels like College Humour, Annoying Orange and Charlieissocoollike demonstrate the popularity of this content.
- fail videos: YouTube quickly became a place where people could upload short, humorous videos captured on smartphones. Similar to the success of sketch comedy on YouTube, these short videos are often compiled into 'fail' compilations.
- how-to videos: In 2015, Google revealed that searches for how-to videos on YouTube had increased by seventy per cent. Given its visual nature and tendency towards brief, concise content, the platform has proven effective at delivering everything from home improvement videos to software tutorials.
- product reviews: YouTube has also become a popular source of product reviews. There are channels dedicated to reviewing all sorts of products from tech gear to knitting patterns. According to a 2014 report by Pixability, YouTube is where people go before purchasing consumer electronics. At that time consumer electronic reviews had amassed 18.9 billion views.
- unboxing videos: Unboxing videos have proven extremely popular on video-sharing sites. These videos typically involve people unboxing new products, such as smartphones, while exploring their features and discussing the product.

One of the key similarities between all of these genres and styles is that they frequently conclude with a request that viewers like and share the video and subscribe to the channel. Creators will often respond to and incorporate user feedback into the videos.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networking platforms have enabled creatives and artists to communicate directly with their followers and build their fan base.

Learning activity

Create a two-minute video about a form of new media technology using one of the following formats: vlog, sketch, how-to video or product review.

CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding websites such as Kickstarter, Indigogo, Pozible and Patreon have allowed individuals to raise money for their creative projects, such as books, albums, artwork or even inventions. Some prominent crowdfunding success stories include:

- *Veronica Mars* (see Figure 2.5.1): Rob Thomas, the showrunner of the television program *Veronica Mars*, took his idea for a cinematic spinoff to Kickstarter. It took less than 11 hours to raise the US\$2 million dollars needed to make the film, which was subsequently released both in cinemas and via video-on-demand services.
- Exploding Kittens: An amusing card game developed by Elan Lee and The Oatmeal's Matthew Inman raised over US\$8 million and was backed by over 200 000 people. The fundraising campaign became one of the largest in Kickstarter's history.
- TableTop: TableTop is a web series developed by Wil Wheaton and Felicia Day. The series focuses on a different tabletop board game every episode, following a group of celebrities as they explain the rules and play the game. The team behind the web series turned to crowdfunding website Indigogo to fund the third season, raising almost US\$1.5 million to create a series of twenty episodes and a new series focusing on role-playing games.



FIGURE 2.5.1 Movie poster for *Veronica Mars* (2014)

In 2013, Patreon ushered in a new model of crowdfunding. Rather than focusing on raising funds for a particular project, Patreon focused on allowing creative people to develop a sustainable income from their content. People who fund an artist through Patreon agree to pay a small fee on a monthly basis or every time the artist releases a new piece of work. The site has become popular with musicians, podcasters, video essayists and comic artists with established fan bases.

2.6 The rise of digital filmmaking

The development of digital filmmaking and the declining cost of equipment has significantly changed the filmmaking industry and opened up new opportunities for independent filmmakers.

CELLULOID VERSUS DIGITAL

Hollywood filmmakers are divided over the quality of digital film. While filmmakers like George Lucas (*Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* 2005) and Robert Rodriguez (*Sin City* 2005, *Planet Terror* 2007) are excited about the prospect, traditionalists like Christopher Nolan (*Batman Begins* 2005, *Interstellar* 2014) maintain that celluloid film is superior in quality.

Side by Side (2012) is a documentary by Chris Kenneally examining the development of digital filmmaking and the future of celluloid. In the documentary, Christopher Nolan explains that he is constantly asked to justify why he continues using film. His cinematographer, Wally Pfister, comments that he is unlikely to trade his oil paints for a packet of crayons. Director Robert Rodriguez, who made *Sin City* and *Planet Terror*, argues that the quality of digital technology will only increase and that filmmakers need to guide the direction of this new technology.

It is difficult to deny that digital film has changed the filmmaking industry. Digital technology continues to change the way that films are shot. Traditionally, filmmakers would only be able to view the footage after the film had been developed. David Fincher (*Zodiac* 2007, *Gone Girl* 2014) argues that the ability to watch footage as it is being shot is advantageous. Some cinematographers argue that this ability has taken away some of the mystery and authority of their role on set. Many filmmakers and cinematographers have also been critical of the resolution and quality of digital film.

The rise of digital filmmaking has also changed the way films are edited. Although digital editing is now an industry standard, there are still those who think it has affected the way that editors think about their work. The very nature of digital editing means that anything is possible and editors don't necessarily take the time to ponder every cut.



FIGURE 2.6.1 Videographers use a Red Camera in New York.

The development of digital filmmaking means that filmmaking has become more affordable and led to a more efficient workflow. The development of smaller digital cameras gives filmmakers greater freedom and flexibility because they aren't limited by the size of the camera or changing film reels. This allows directors to go for longer periods without stopping. When George Lucas made the *Star Wars* (2002) prequels, he wanted to save money by making the entire process digital. *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* was shot entirely on an experimental, high-definition digital camera. Robert Rodriguez was another early adopter who saw the benefit of shooting digitally. Recognising the advantages of the digital format also meant that he was able to create an authentic, big screen adaptation of Frank Miller's comic book *Sin City*.

Learning activities

- 1 Watch the documentary *Side by Side*.
- 2 As you are watching, make a list of the arguments made about both formats. Share your observations with the class.
- 3 Create an infographic describing the pros and cons of both traditional celluloid film and digital film.

2.7 The changing face of news and publishing

New media technology is redefining the news industry, destabilising the traditional role that newspapers have played in providing news and opening up a range of new possibilities. News continues to be an important part of the democratic process. Both new and traditional outlets play an important role in providing citizens with information about important social, economic and political issues.

THE DECLINE OF NEWSPAPERS

Since the turn of the century, newspapers have seen a significant decline in circulation and profit, leading some to question how quality journalism will survive in the digital age.

According to a 2016 report conducted by industry research firm IBISWorld, the \$4 billion Australian newspaper industry had declined by over 8 per cent in the previous five years.

A key reason for the decline in newspaper profits is sites like eBay, Craigslist and Gumtree, which have compromised the newspaper industry's traditional reliance on classified advertising. At the same time, many people have turned to digital publications for news. While traditional newspapers have moved online, their owners are still struggling to monetise their online presence. Online advertising is far less profitable than it was in print publications. Some newspapers, like *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Australian* have instituted pay walls. *The Guardian* has continued to provide content for free but encourages its readers to become 'supporters' for \$100 a year.

THE RISE OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Social media has redefined the nature of news, allowing both experienced journalists and everyday people to report on events as they happen. The 2013 terrorist bombing of the Boston Marathon was a defining moment for citizen journalism. Social media, particularly sites like Twitter and Reddit, were flooded with information about the event, including eyewitness accounts, photographs and videos. Although this event demonstrated the potential of citizen journalism, it also highlighted how false and misleading information can spread quickly in such situations. Minutes after the bombing, a user on Reddit noted the similarities between the second suspect in the bombing and missing man Sunil Tripathi whose family had started a Facebook

page to find him. The story spread from Reddit to Twitter. A month later, his body was discovered after an apparent suicide. Similarly, the *New York Post* published a photograph of a 17-year-old boy and his coach who had been identified as potential suspects on Reddit and the online bulletin board, 4chan. Events like these demonstrate both the potential of citizen journalism and also the importance of quality journalism.

In London, after the 2005 bombing on three underground trains and a bus, several hundred photos and around 30 video clips were sent to the BBC. Later, about 70 of these images and five of the clips were used on the BBC website.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Investigative journalism has always been an important function of traditional news organisations. These journalists take the time and effort to explore important issues such as government corruption and corporate greed by undertaking investigations that might span years. Because it is time consuming and expensive, investigative journalism is threatened by declining newspaper revenue.

DIGITAL DISRUPTION

In 2015, the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* produced an episode called 'Digital Disruption', which explores the effects that new media technology has on news. Journalist Peter Greste discusses the immense pressure that new technology puts journalists under as they are forced to compete with the immediacy of social media while simultaneously being required to consider the story, check facts, confirm sources and ask further questions. He also claims that the imperative to sensationalise news for 'click-throughs' has led to a decline in the quality of reporting.



FIGURE 2.7.1 ABC journalist Sophie McNeil suggests that advances in filmmaking technology have given her news stories more of a documentary feel.

Advances in technology means that foreign correspondents often take responsibility for every aspect of production, including interviews, shooting, lighting, sound and editing. Journalist, Sophie McNeil explains that this has given her reporting a more documentary feel. 'Cynical people will tell you that we are only doing it this way because of budget reasons, and it is true that the ABC received large budget cuts and we had to look at how to do things differently,' she said. 'But I've been a video journalist for over ten years now and I really like the style of storytelling. I like the way you get close to people, you hang out with people, you get a behind-the-scenes feel, a more documentary style than you would get with a regular crew.' The speed of new technology means that stories can be filmed and edited in a short period of time and broadcast in Australia shortly thereafter.

David O'Shea from SBS's *Dateline* says one of the advantages of being a video journalist is the 'freedom of working alone' while one of the disadvantages is that there is no one 'watching your back'. He notes that when reporting demonstrations, video journalists need to be fully aware of their surroundings and hyper-sensitive to the mood of the crowd and the police.

VIRAL NEWS AND CLICKBAIT

In the new media landscape, the news stories that succeed and spread are those that attract click-throughs, often through sensational subject matter or outrageous headlines.

BuzzFeed is a site specialising in viral content—articles, videos, photographs and quizzes that spread quickly online. Stories are traditionally sensationalist or have some kind of hook that inspires readers to click through to the content. In recent years, the site has invested heavily in serious reporting and journalism. Nevertheless, it has received criticism for plagiarism, copyright infringement and sponsored content.

Journalists are divided about this style of reporting. Some argue that the ability to write a snappy headline and engaging introduction has always been relevant to journalists. Others like Ken Smith in an article titled 'Clickbait: The changing face of online journalism', argues that some fear it might lead to a dumbing down of content as click-throughs shape the content of online newspapers, leading to an emphasis on trivial stories as opposed to serious reporting.

THE PODCASTING REVOLUTION

Podcasting developed as a way to distribute content, principally audio programs, over the internet for playback on portable media devices. The term is a combination of the words iPod and broadcasting. Similar in style to traditional radio programs, podcasts are distributed by RSS feeds, which automatically download new episodes when they are released. The form experienced increased popularity when Apple added podcasts to iTunes. Traditional news organisations such as the ABC and the BBC were quick to release their content via podcasts. Although the number of independent podcasts proliferated, many argue that the form started to mature upon the release of Serial (see Figure 2.7.2), a non-fiction podcast exploring true crimes. The first season of Serial explored the 1999 murder of an 18-year-old high-school student from Baltimore. The program quickly climbed the charts on iTunes and received a 2015 Peabody award for its service to American radio.

Thanks to the success of highly publicised podcasts like Serial and This American Life, the audience for podcasting continues to grow. According to The Pew Research Centre, by 2016 over one-fifth of Americans had listened to a podcast in the last month. Without the constraints of advertising and time slots, podcasts are free to focus on story. Serial has been praised for its engaging, long-form storytelling. Critics of the program suggest that its personal style and use of fictional narrative techniques, such as cliffhangers, means that it is very different from traditional, objective reporting. The success of Serial also sparked other cold case, true crime stories told in this style, including HBO's *The Jinx*, which explored the involvement of real-estate scion Robert Durst in several murders, and Netflix's *Making a Murderer*, which looked at the wrongful conviction and subsequent accusations against Manitowoc County resident Steven Avery.

The popularity of these programs has led to a new trend in crime reporting, a combination of traditional documentary and a binge-worthy drama, peppered with clues, red herrings and cliffhangers. Brian McNair, Professor of Journalism, Media and Communication at Queensland University of Technology, has labelled this new form 'factuality'.

Factuality can be defined as fact-based content which has much in common with investigative and other forms of journalism, but strongly features elements of narrative drama, soap opera, and other fictional formats such as cliff-hanging endings, unexpected plot twists and jaw-dropping moments of revelation.

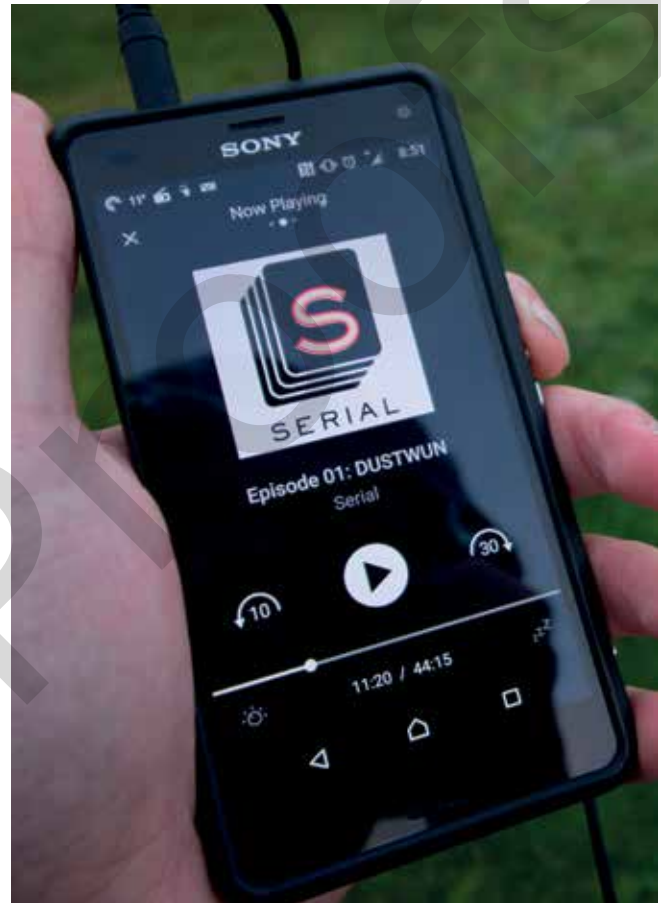


FIGURE 2.7.2 The podcast Serial

Learning activity

Record an audio or video vox pop with members of your school community during which you ask two questions: 'Where do you get your news?' and 'Does good journalism matter?' Edit your video or audio into a segment and share it with your class.

BOOK PUBLISHING AND CHANGE

TABLETS AND E-BOOKS

The emergence of tablet computers and e-book readers, such as the Amazon Kindle and Apple iPad, is influencing the way that content is distributed and consumed (see Figure 2.7.3).

The arrival of tablet computing is seen by some as the saviour of magazines and newspapers whose circulations have been in decline over the last decade. Publications like *Wired* and *Rolling Stone* have created content for the iPad, incorporating interactive elements such as video and audio into traditional written and photographic content.



FIGURE 2.7.3 E-book readers have changed the way books are sold, distributed and consumed.

Project Gutenberg, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing out-of-copyright texts in digital and e-book format, was established in 1971. Through the aid of Project Gutenberg volunteers and sponsors, over 33 000 free e-books have been created for download onto all major e-book readers. Consumers are also able to buy a range of contemporary novels online for their e-book devices.

In July 2009, Amazon Kindle users who purchased George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* were surprised to discover that the titles had been deleted from their devices. Amazon decided to remove the novels from devices and retract their sale in e-book format after discovering the books being distributed were illegal copies. After they were severely criticised for the move and, ironically, compared to the totalitarian government portrayed in *1984*, Amazon offered customers a refund or credit for their purchase, or the return of their e-books.

Although e-books have been available for over a decade, the increasing popularity and development of e-book readers and tablet computing has contributed to e-books becoming a more convenient and accessible way to read texts. The technology behind e-book devices has improved to incorporate more user-friendly reading formats, and the spread of the internet has allowed for greater transfer of electronic files.

ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO PRINT

In 2015, author Gary Whitta who wrote the screenplay for *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) crowdfunded his historical fantasy novel *Abomination* on the publishing site Inkshares. Adopting a similar model to sites like Kickstarter and Pozible, the site allows authors to crowdfund a project. When sufficient funds are raised the company takes responsibility for editing, producing, distributing, marketing and publishing printed copies of the novel.

The internet also makes it possible for unpublished writers to share their stories and develop their craft by joining online communities. These communities offer new ways for writers to share and receive feedback on their work. Sites like National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) encourage users to write an entire novel in one month. Others, such as the Reddit Writer's Group, are communities that provide inspiration and encouragement.

2.8 The future of television

One of the defining media technologies of the twentieth century, the television industry, is undergoing huge changes. New media technology is disrupting the content and distribution of what we have traditionally consumed on the small screen.

STREAMING SERVICES

The development of streaming services such as Netflix, Stan and Amazon Prime has fundamentally changed the way that we consume television. Traditional broadcast television gained revenue from advertising. Television programs were a way to deliver audiences to advertisers. In many ways, the nature of broadcast television and advertising shaped the content of programs. Television dramas were written to fit into 45-minute time slots. The three-act structure of episodes was punctuated with cliffhangers preceding ad breaks to ensure that viewers didn't channel surf. During the reign of broadcast television, episode dramas and situation comedies were popular, since they didn't require audiences to tune in every week. The introduction of streaming services has disrupted these long-established storytelling conventions, allowing programs to tell complex, long-form stories that would lose an audience if they were broadcast in a weekly time slot. In a 2013 speech at the Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival, actor Kevin Spacey (*House of Cards*) explained why these services are changing the face of television (see Figure 2.8.1).

Streaming services are subverting the traditional model of asking producers to create expensive pilots, instead focusing on developing an entire series that will engage their subscribers. During his speech, Spacey pointed out that these new services are giving audiences what they want, the ability to 'binge' and lose themselves in a series. In the coming years, Spacey predicts that the difference between films, television and online content will dissolve but the audience's love for story will remain.

Learning activity

The Golden Age of Television, which many argued began in the early 2000s, is characterised by cinematic visuals and engaging storytelling. Select a scene from a television program that you like and, in the form of a video essay, answer the following questions:

- What is the Golden Age of Television?
- What makes this program and this scene an effective example of modern television?
- What cinematic codes and storytelling conventions make this scene engaging?



FIGURE 2.8.1 Kevin Spacey

2.9 Video games

In the last two decades, video games have become a mainstream form of media. According to the NewZoo Global Games Market Report, the video games industry generated US\$99.6 billion in 2016. The availability of a variety of gaming platforms, such as game consoles, handheld devices and online games, has contributed to the popularity of video gaming in the home.

VIDEO GAME NARRATIVES

Modern video games often have sprawling and sophisticated narratives. Novels have always allowed readers to explore elaborate worlds and video games have the potential to offer the same level of complexity in an immersive and non-linear style. Sandbox games, such as *Fallout 4* and *Farcry 4*, allow players to choose their own direction by exploring an immense number of subplots and side missions set within the parameters the developers have created. Games like the immensely popular *Minecraft* have few rules at all: allowing players to explore and create with few boundaries.

Critics of video games cite extended and immersive game play as a reason for concern. Players can engross themselves in a game for hours and even days on end, raising fears of unhealthy and obsessive use. Some psychiatrists and doctors have suggested that video game obsession is as powerful as drug addiction, but video game manufacturers maintain that extended game play is no more harmful than reading a book or watching television for long periods of time.

ONLINE GAMES

As internet speeds have increased, online gaming has become a more popular pastime. Console games often incorporate significant elements of online play. Many games not only encourage but necessitate effective cooperation with other players to survive campaigns. While players often communicate during the game via text chat, it is more common for them to talk to each other using headsets.

One of the most significant developments in online gaming has been the rise of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), which allow thousands of players to interact in the same virtual world. Popular MMORPGs include *World of Warcraft*, *EVE Online*, *Neverwinter*, *Elderscrolls Online* and *Guild Wars 2*. *World of Warcraft* is the most prominent and long-running

MMORPG and had approximately 5.6 million subscribers in 2015. Players create a character who acquires skills and advances through the game by completing quests and exploring its virtual worlds. The game encourages interaction between players by requiring the formation of teams to fight their way through scenarios and engage in player-versus-player combat.

VIDEO GAMES AND VIOLENCE

Video games are often criticised for their depiction of violence. It is argued that the immersive and interactive nature of video games means they are more likely to encourage violent and aggressive behaviour in the real world.

In his article 'Reality bytes: Eight myths about video games debunked' professor and media scholar Henry Jenkins seeks to dispel myths surrounding video game violence. He points out that despite their proliferation, juvenile violence in the USA was at a thirty-year low in the early 2000s. In 2010, US psychologist Christopher Ferguson conducted a study of research into video game violence. He found, once the studies were adjusted for publication bias, that there was little evidence to suggest that violent video games contribute to real-world aggression and violence.

These findings are at odds with the research of US psychologist Craig Anderson, whose 2001 study found that children who play violent video games are more likely to engage in aggressive play. Likewise, Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, a former military psychologist, believes that video games are conditioning young people to become killers, pointing out strong parallels between violent video games and the interactive training used by the US military.

While video games such as *Grand Theft Auto* are frequently criticised for their depiction of violence, commentators usually ignore the role this violence plays in a complex and deeply satirical narrative.



FIGURE 2.9.1 Games like Mass Effect: Andromeda challenge representations of gender by allowing players to play as male or female without changing the nature of the character.

In Red Dead Redemption, players are rewarded for acting morally; it is more financially rewarding to return a wanted criminal alive than dead. In Bioshock, players are forced to make a series of moral decisions that influence the outcome of the game. Unlike films and novels, in which the audience often criticises the actions of other characters, video games allow the player to question their own behaviour. While the Mass Effect games traditionally had a morality system allowing players to make either 'paragon' or 'renegade' decisions to resolve a situation, a more recent installment in the franchise, Mass Effect: Andromeda, measures moral decisions in a more nuanced manner, reflecting the trend towards more morally complex games.

GENDER IN VIDEO GAMES

Like any form of new technology, the development of video games has been accompanied by moral panic, including claims of the over-sexualisation of women.

Video games have come under scrutiny for their representation of gender roles. In the 1990s, the Tomb Raider franchise was condemned for its representation of women. Although Lara Croft, the main character in the games, is a strong, intelligent and independent woman, critics of the franchise have accused her of being a highly sexualised male fantasy figure. Although these sorts of complaints are often levelled at video games, it is important to remember that similar arguments are made about representations of women in other media forms including films, magazines and television.

Critics suggest that video games are directed at a predominantly male audience and are, therefore, explicitly violent and applaud macho behaviour. However, studies have shown that video games have attracted an increasingly diverse audience in the last decade. According to 2007 marketing research firm Nielsen, 41 per cent of gamers in Australia are female. The significant interest from female gamers has coincided with a trend towards more complex and multifaceted female characters, such as those shown in games like Mass Effect: Andromeda (see Figure 2.9.1). Many modern video games, particularly role-playing games, also give players a choice of gender, which is something that was almost unheard of a decade ago.

Learning activities

- 1 Research a female character from a video game and produce a video essay using game-play footage describing their representation in the game.
- 2 Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine that expresses your point of view on one of the following statements. Support your argument with evidence.
 - Video games are a major source of violence in modern society.
 - Video game addiction and excessive game play is a serious problem.
 - Video games inaccurately portray representations of gender.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Forms of new media have significant creative and cultural implications.
- New media forms arise through the development and convergence of different media technologies.
- Since the development of the printing press and the birth of the mass media, new media technologies have contributed to changing the way that people communicate and interact with each other.
- The development of new media is usually accompanied by anxiety and moral panic over its potential effects on audiences.
- New media technologies that make it easier to copy music, films and television programs are challenging traditional copyright laws.
- In recent decades, the mass media has become far more participatory, putting greater power in the hands of ordinary people.
- New media technologies such as blogs, wikis and social networking websites have resulted in a number of social changes, particularly regarding content creation, distribution and authenticity, and ideals surrounding privacy.
- New media technologies can have both positive and negative effects on audiences.

ASSESSMENT TASK

Choose a form of new media that you are interested in (e.g. digital music, social networking websites, blogs, tablet computers, e-book readers, smartphones, video games etc.) and conduct some research to find out more about the changes it has instigated. To ensure that your research is relevant and up to date, use a search engine to find articles about this new form of technology that have been published within the last two years.

Using the findings from your research, create a short documentary or podcast episode.

Your media product will:

- describe the characteristics of the new media form
- outline the positive and negative implications of the new media form, including its implications for the audience, society, economy, industry, government, culture and ethics
- describe how the new media form influences the way people communicate with each other and their consumption of media texts
- predict the direction the new media will take in the near future.