

What benefits the media brings



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Mass communication, like anything, has its pros and cons; however mass media has far more advantages to offer the world than it does to harm it. They can take us to a distant land or teach us about the intricacies of the animal kingdom and in today's world, surfing the Internet for anything from business to pleasure, we experience information in a way unlike ever before in history. I hope to shed light on the benefits of Media on the world, the opinion of the public on Media, how media can be educational and lastly how the Internet is now a new " Mass Medium".

The general populous has an interesting alliance with Media in that it is the populous that gives " life" to the " mass media machine". Early on in human history, " mass media" was communicated through " word of mouth," and it was that very link that gave way to small town " gossip" in the middle ages , where information like what the local officials were " up to" and who was having relations with who and etc would circulate around. Word of mouth would remain the largest " Mass Media" until the invention of the printing press in 1436 when the news of the town could be told and recorded forever.

So with that being said, let me begin my paper. I first looked at what the people thought of " Mass Media" through the " eyes" of a poll taken about what the public's view on the media was. The information was reported in a Article by Joe Saltzman and states that "... the public's use and view of its media, shows that word of mouth is less trusted than CNN, public television news, local television news, and prime-time TV news magazines. News anchors American's see on television are considered more reliable as sources of accurate information than personal acquaintances" (par 3).

That appears to suggest that after the set off of the press, people find that a recognized news source rather than a personal contact is to be trusted.

People feel that they can trust a Anchor as long as he/she remains credible and they feel optimistic because of that fact. Another benefit we “ modern” people have as opposed to our “ ancient” counterparts is that we are citizens who get our information from trusted sources such as CNN, local news casts, public television news, and as a result we tend to usually end up better informed and more accurately informed than those ancient immigrants and our forefathers from their word of mouth reporting.

The advantages of Media continue in an area you might not expect: education. Not just education in the form of reading and arithmetic but “ life” education. From the article, “ Media Education” by Marjorie Hogan we find that if the public is media literate in how to “ break-down” the content of the media and read what messages each presentation and advertisement is telling us, rather than taking something at its “ face value”, then the public will be able to make better choices and educate their children about the messages of all media, and thereby control their children’s exposure to potentially harmful media (Hogan, par 7).

There are also enormous amounts of educational programming such as, Sesame Street, Nickelodeon, and for the older kids’, documentaries from public TV, channels like A&E and The History Channel. In an article by Aletha C. Huston and John C. Wright, called “ Television and the Informational and Educational Needs of Children,” we see that the television medium seems to of had a positive effect on children’s education process.

In 1990 the article says that the Children's Television Act was passed mandating all broadcast stations to provide programming that, "meets the educational and informational needs of children and youths" (Huston, par 2). This meant that during the daytime stations had to play a minimum of three hours of educational media a day (Huston, par 2). Sesame street helped to educate the urban "poor" in the inner cities that normally wouldn't have the opportunity to gain a quality education like their suburban counterparts who have better access to quality schools. Since the passing of the Children's Television Act the number of educational programming has increased ten-fold.

These programs have led to children having, according to Huston and Wright, "...social skills, (for example, cooperation, conflict resolution, knowledge about different cultures), emotional development (for example, understanding feelings), creativity, language and literacy, positive attitudes about learning, critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative skills, cognitive skills (for example, inference, concept formation), and knowledge about the arts, history, social science, and natural science (Neapolitan and Huston 1994)" (par 11).

Oddly enough these are all things, together with books read while young, that gave me an upper edge on my classmates in reading and critical thinking as well as giving me a curiosity and longing for a lifelong quest of knowledge. The electronic age is one filled with uncertainty because so much lies within our reach that at times it's overwhelming. Presently most colleges and universities are filled with computer systems and the new reference librarians have it easier than their ancient counterparts, they can locate info

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at a faster rate and keep it more readily available, which all help advance, reference service immensely.

This is one aspect of this new Internet age. It is filled with life elevating and turbulent times ahead. In an article, "The Net-Setters," Neal Gabler goes on to explain how the net-savvy people of today rival the early Jet-Setters of the 1960's. Gabler says, "...what they live is the cyberlife-more thrilling to many than the old high life of the jet-setters because it has more variety. In cyberspace, there are virtually no limits to what you can purport to do" (par 3).

The thing is with the Internet there is so much locked away potential that no one can avoid hearing of it. It's recognized that the Internet is the future yet there is much ambiguity to where it will truly go and how it will be used. The Internet is a force to be dealt with, but it is sure to serve humanity much as its precursors of media have, to learn from and aid the greater distribution of information to all in this new fast-paced information super age.

All things discussed, public perception of mass media is high by having and making our lives more comfortable and more informed, the educational value of media by helping our children to grasp concepts and skills, and the computer/Internet revolution by expanding our minds to boundless possibilities have all made impacts on who we are as humans and what we will become in the future as we progress through the ages. Hopefully mass media will last several more hundred years being that "mass media" is only relatively young in the scheme of all of human history is considered.