

Technology and individual freedom

Business



Technology had a big impact on people living between the 1400s and 1600s. It improved people's lives in many ways, but more than that, technology gave people a sense of physical and mental freedom. In the 15th century, the Portuguese began designing new ships that could handle longer sea voyages. By the 16th century, Europeans were constructing larger galleons for carting cannons and troops to prepare for any battles.

Along with better-constructed ships came the astrolabe and quadrant, which both plotted the position, direction and speed of a ship. Now that people could trace out where the ship was going, they were able to draw maps, noting careful details about harbors, soundings, and landmarks. Sailors of previous times were very afraid of sailing the waters, and had no sense of direction. Now, sailors were free of the worry of landing in a wrong place, and they could plan where they wanted to land, and how far the distance was going to be. The invention of the mechanical was also something that gave people freedom. Before the age of mechanical clocks, people used hourglasses and sundials to tell time.

Clockmakers would make mechanical clocks for use in church buildings and city halls. They'd strike every hour or every 15 minutes, informing the city-dwellers what time it was during the night or day. This was helpful in some way, but the clocks were difficult to move. Around 1500, the spring-driven watch was invented. They were larger and weighed more than modern pocket watches, and gained or lost 15 minutes per day, but people really appreciated the improvement. No more were people limited to the church clock to tell them time, and people could now schedule their day based on exact time, not by sunrise, noon, and dusk, which varied with the seasons.

Another invention that changed people's lives was the printing press. In the early 6th century, the people of China had invented prints by pressing linen paper against inked wooded blocks. This process didn't reach Europe until centuries later, and by 1400, printers manufactured books using the block printing technique. In 1440, Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press, which used interchangeable metal letters instead of wood blocks. The could be used many times, the process to make books was a lot cheaper, and large amounts of books could be printed at once. By 1501, over 100 printing presses were in cities and towns all across Europe. Thanks to this amazing invention, folks could have Bibles and other written work for themselves.

Along with more Bibles being manufactured, different translations of it were produced, instead of the languages only being in Latin, Hebrew, and Greek. People no longer had to depend on word-of-mouth news to keep them updated, and they now had the freedom to either believe the people's opinions or the truth of the Bible. Thanks to the new Bible and literature translations, people had the freedom of understanding them for themselves. From spring-driven clocks to movable type, these inventions changed the way people lived and did things, and offered them a greater sense of freedom.