
Reviewed by: Richard J. Varey

The author succeeds in presenting an original examination of the nature and consequences of the media environment we live with, in, and by. Through a comprehensive, succinct, and critical review of a range of significant explanations of new media, this project proposes an alternative perspective to address the issues identified. In so doing, the author implicates an interesting, challenging, and fresh, research agenda.

Instead of simply applying media theory from media studies and the sociology of communication to the field of new media, Holmes reflectively and critically examines contemporary new media (communication technologies) to bring media theory into sharper focus. He rejects the notion that a new media age has overtaken an earlier media age, and concludes that we should adopt the as yet under-used concept of integration for understanding both broadcast and ?cybersociety together. Whereas many studies have focused on interaction, this inquiry centres social integration as both a possibility and a consequence of broadcast and network system architecture.

Pivotal to this analysis is the distinction of transportation and ritual conceptions of human communication. Much research and explanation is logocentric, derived from information theory and the technics of signal transmission. The alternative understanding of human connection allows us to re-view both broadcast and network forms of media system and to notice differences in level of reciprocity and integration if we dont get hooked on content, representation, semiotics, and ideology. Holmes characterises broadcast as reciprocity without interaction, whilst network (with the Internet as exemplar) has interaction without reciprocity. Thus, intriguingly, we can understand broadcast as a medium of social integration, rather than as only fragmenter and isolator.

Chapter 2 introduces the main theoretical perspectives on broadcast culture, showing that there is a preponderance of attention to content in accounts of the rise of the mass society and the mass media of the culture industry. The author neatly addresses the problem of which one led to the other. Chapter 3 examines form, medium, and process in the network media culture.

In Chapter 4, Holmes takes on the commonsense idea that a first media age (of broadcast) is being superseded by a second media age (of interactivity). He shows that the idea can be undermined (even denied) by realising that broadcast communication and interactive communication have common central characteristics, and that they operate mutually. The distinctiveness of the so-called second age may be much more about the extent of technological extension that it is about the degree of interactivity. Yet again, we see the either/or separation melt into and/with, and the possibility of transcendence that can be found in many fields of knowledge as convergence and integration are realised.

Chapter 5 extensively reviews Derridas concept of logocentrism to show that much analysis assumes a transportation metaphor for communication, and treats media as channel. Holmes works hard to show that the alternative ritual conception of communicating can bring media forward as a social environment. It is social integration that is the proper concern of the social scientist, whereas interaction backgrounds the social in favour of technical ?message-making. This is well highlighted in Chapter 6 in the discussion of a theory of community. There is need for conceptual clarification, given a rather difficult metaphysics of ?virtual communities. We can see, in reading this work, that a move from a theory of medium to a theory of integration offers some fascinating and challenging opportunities for our understanding of culture and the context of a media-rich social environment.

Interestingly, Holmes reveals our yearning for interaction, and the question of why we seek that in technologically extended forms? We appear to use communication media to provide interaction experiences that we avoid or deny in using the technologies in place of mutual co-presence! The logocentric view, in fact, over plays the significance of the physical ?face-to-face form of interaction.

For me this is a significant move forward, as much discussion in the fields of marketing and public relations, and others, is only now seriously considering interaction. Reading this book will significantly address the problematic notion of interactivity that is pervading the literature and our research agendas.
I agree with Professor Jones endorsement of this book. David Holmes has provided us with both an effective textbook and a resource for researchers and scholars that clarifies and frames a complex field for further study.

**Purchase information:** This book is available from all good booksellers, or can be purchased direct from Footprint Books at [www.footprint.com.au](http://www.footprint.com.au).

**About the reviewer:**

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Formerly Reader in Communication & Management, and Director of the Centre for Communication & Knowledge in Management, a research group of the Information Systems Research Institute, at the University of Salford, Richard is a member of the editorial boards of the *Journal of Communication Management*, the *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *Corporate Reputation Review*, the *Journal of Management Development*, the *International Journal of Applied Marketing* and *PRism: Online journal of refereed public relations and communication research*. He is a member of the Advisory Committee and Visiting Professor of the Corporate Communication Institute at Fairleigh Dickinson University.

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