The History of Communication History

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Communication history is at once a new field and a very old practice. Whether we emphasize the former or the latter depends on how we define “communication history.” On the one hand, if we define it as a fully conceptualized, collectively self-aware field gathered under the sign “communication history,” then we would have to say that it is a formation still coming into being—hopefuly nudged along by this Handbook, which brings together scattered impulses that have been gathering force since the 1970s. On the other hand, we can conceive communication history in more spacious terms, understanding it as written, spoken, or other mediated representations of signifying events and practices in the past. From this perspective, every culture has at least some analogue to communication history—e.g., declarations from the gods or words from the leaders of earlier generations passed down through oral modes and traditions. In traditional societies these acts of remembering were not conceived of as history, nor were the practices understood as “communication,” so the analogy is imperfect. Nonetheless, the scope of communication history potentially reaches out toward the history of humanity writ large.

As a way of narrating the history and pre-history of a self-aware scholarly field still being born, we will reign in the potentially universalizing breadth and focus on a discrete set of tributaries that feed communication history as conceived in this volume. The headwaters for the main streams lie in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when philosophers, professors of rhetoric, historians, philologists, political economists, anthropologists, and sociologists variously cast attention to language and modes of social communication in long historical perspective. Out of their writings, “communication” emerged as an increasingly important idea for making sense of the development and organization of knowledge, society, political life, and individual selves. Referencing a world of both signs and symbols, as well as material technologies and modes of transportation, communication was a spacious term that could do a great deal of theoretical work—and whose history was thought to be both valuable in its own right and capable of revealing important dimensions of the present.

Though it has a long prehistory, as late as 1991 Michael Schudson could declare that the “writing of communication history is woefully underdeveloped” (175). Two decades later, that claim is less true. Historical writing on communication has developed considerably since then in volume and quality, such that a number of areas within it now have a solid and growing corpus of first-rate research. This volume seeks to simultaneously document and contribute to that development.
This chapter traces the history and prehistory of communication history. We understand our subject in four partially overlapping ways as: (1) writing about communication history explicitly named as such—a relatively small body of work that dates back to the 1970s; (2) historical writing about communication thus named, a line of work that runs from speculative philosophical histories of the eighteenth century to the present and ranges in focus from sweeping metanarratives to highly focused empirical studies; (3) historical writing about practices and technologies like rhetoric, journalism, and particular media, not explicitly organized under the sign of communication, but clearly addressing communicative phenomena—a focus that takes us back to the ancient world and reaches out to a heterogeneous family of scholarly literatures; (4) historically informed theoretical writings about communication that have exercised considerable influence on communication studies writ large. The first two are the core foci of this chapter. The third supplements that core with more extended discussions in other chapters of the Handbook. And the fourth is intended to draw attention to historiographic impulses in the field of communication history as a whole, thus bolstering a subsidiary aim of the volume—namely to encourage more historically informed thinking in communication study that is not primarily historical in focus.

The account here proceeds mostly chronologically, calling attention to different traditions, intellectual styles, disciplinary origins, and contemporary families of communication history, and is thus more intellectual than social, cultural, political, institutional, or technological, reflecting our belief in the usefulness of intellectual history as a genealogical and cartographic tool. But we might supplement that story with two additional ways to think about the history of communication history and to emplot our map of the field: via the media used for representing the communicative past and those that dominated the societies from which it emerged; and via the ideological orientations that have guided it. We briefly sketch those plot lines, which we episodically mark in the remainder of our essay.

We can talk about oral, chirographic (handwritten), print, broadcast, and digital eras and traditions of communication history. To operate with a broad brush, ancient and traditional oral societies pass on sayings, speeches, and communicative events through the oratorical-rhetorical tradition that stretched from Greek antiquity into the eighteenth century, where great speakers and speeches from the past were taken as templates for civic virtue, citizenship, and the oratorical eloquence through which they were expressed. For civic humanist communication history, the past is paradigmatically cast as a moral touchstone for a society that has fallen away from its virtues and civic community. Civic humanist sensibilities often informed the liberal histories that began emerging in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and dominated the age of print-based communication history. If civic humanists were susceptible to the narrative of decline, the historical and liberal communication history has been marked by tales of progress—often with communication and media as engines for progressive social and political change. One strand of it has been criticized as "Whig history," emphasizing inevitable progress based on heroic individual efforts and effectively feeding the conceits of the present. In contrast, the critical tradition since Marx—when it has managed to overcome its suspicion that communication is a mere epiphenomenon to the real material processes of society—has rejected both the civic humanist valorization of a virtuous past and the liberal tale of Whiggish progress, while maintaining hopes for a better future. It has featured struggle, power, and the social deformations of both past and present as central categories for communication history, paradoxically cast as critical social praxis that can orient present and future struggles for justice. Conservatism comes in several varieties, but in its anti-modern guise it can result in communication histories that look back more or less nostalgically to oral cultures and the spoken word (a sensibility also found in romantically-inflected communication history). Finally, over the last several decades, feminist, postcolonial, critical race, and queer politics have shaped the writing of communication history, variously driving efforts to recover previously marginalized voices and experiences of the past; to critically interrogate their exclusion, domination, and resistance; and to work toward emancipation, empowerment, and continuing critical intervention in the present (compare the ideological mapping in Curran 2002, 2009).

Before proceeding, a few caveats are in order. Although our chapter includes a great deal, it leaves out even more. After a global feint toward ancient traditions of proto-communication history, the focus narrows to Europe and North America. Overall in the chapter, the United States, Great Britain, Germany, France, and Canada receive the vast majority of attention. Although we have organized our story chronologically, reaching across national borders as much as we can, and cutting across general (or what Schudson [1991] called "macro") histories of communication and literature focusing on more specific topics, media, and social practices. We begin with a brief glance toward the proto-communication history manifest in the European rhetorical tradition and ancient religious texts from around the world before turning to the discovery of "communication" in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England and France and the dawn of historical writing on the subject. From there, we move through nineteenth-century political economy, sociology, anthropology, and newspaper science (Zeitwissenschaft) in Germany,
ANCIENT AND MODERN PRECURSORS OF COMMUNICATION HISTORY

Though historical writing about “communication” thus named did not emerge before the seventeenth century, we can talk about prehistories of communication history that extended back to antiquity. One influential stream ran through the Greco-Latin rhetorical tradition—distinctive in world history for treating speech as an independent art that could be taught separately from ethics, politics, or sacred learning (Kennedy 1999). Rhetoric (which functioned as the term for “communication” in Anglophone university curricula from the eighteenth into the early twentieth century) enmeshed itself with history in multiple ways. As Jan Swearingen reminds us in chapter 5, this volume, not only was history traditionally conceived as a rhetorical genre—designed to educate, morally instruct, and cultivate “the civic virtues necessary to create coherent societies”—but it was also coming with speeches purported to have been delivered by the protagonists and their opponents in the past. Taking his cues from the Homeric epics, Herodotus (whom Cicero called the “father of history”) represented the speeches of Persians and Greeks and “helped to establish speech as a canonical element of classical historiography” (Woodman 2001, 339). While the dubious facticity of these representations makes this genre of history writing very different from its modern variants, we can read them as early efforts to depict significant communication events of the past for the rhetorical purposes of a present. Arising from cultures that deeply valued their traditions dating back at least to the Antidosis of Isocrates (436–338 BCE), which cast logos as the engine of human society. Among the philosophers, communication was often connected with ideas of mediation, which also appeared with increasing frequency and analogical terms as the expression of both Ciceronian eloquence and Catholic tradition, and came to serve as an ideal for the open sharing of science and reason alike (see Leach, chapter 16, this volume). Meanwhile, operating in different discursive space, the first doctoral dissertation on newspapers appeared in Germany in 1690, and included several sections devoted to tracing the historical roots of the newspaper back to ancient Greece and Rome (Atwood and de Beer 2001).

The Rise of “Communication” in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, “communication” became an important keyword in English, French, and Scottish philosophical discourses, and came to link itself with historical narratives as well. It was informed by and contributed to early modern liberalism, Enlightenment ideologies of progress, and civic republican communitarian thought. It arose in the contexts of religious disputes among Protestants and Catholics; European colonization of Africa, the Americas, and India; the birth of modern science; and the increasing spread of people, writing, images, and broader systems of transportation and communicative exchange around the globe (see Mattelart 1996). John Locke made “communication” an important concept in his hugely influential Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), where it captured the ways of transmitting ideas from one mind to the next through words and helped underwrite some of the tenets of liberal individualism (Peters 1989). The idea also found a place in the writings of the giants of seventeenth-century English science—including Francis Bacon, Sir Isaac Newton, John Glanville, and John Wilkins (Heyer 1988; Peters 1989, 1999; Guillory 2010). Communication stood for transparency and clarity, in contradistinction to the perceived obscurity of both Ciceronian eloquence and Catholic tradition, and came to serve as an ideal for the open sharing of science and reason alike (see Leach, chapter 16, this volume). Meanwhile, operating in different discursive space, the first doctoral dissertation on newspapers appeared in Germany in 1690, and included several sections devoted to tracing the historical roots of the newspaper back to ancient Greece and Rome (Atwood and de Beer 2001).

The communication idea received considerable attention in the French and Scottish Enlightenment, enriching a broader array of thinking and research about the nature and historical development of language, media, and civilization writ large. We see this in the great French Encyclopédie, whose introductory Discours Préliminaire casts “communication” as a fundamental process in the historical organization of human society (D’Alembert [1751] 1995; also Darnton 1979; and Blum 2005). This speculative or conjectural history of civilization tracied a longer tradition dating back at least to the Antidosis of Isocrates (436–338 BCE), which cast logos in analogous terms as the engine of human society. Among the philosophers, communication was often connected with ideas of mediation, which also appeared with increasing frequency and helped power the Enlightenment as a movement (Siskin and Warner 2010). The idea connected itself to ideologies of human progress, mapped onto the development of language, gesture, writing, and print over time—“part of an inevitable unfolding sequence of human history,” as one historian has put it (McDowell 2010, 244; see also Heyer 1988; Mattelart 1996). It played a role in ideological sorting mechanisms that distinguished “civilization” from so-called primitive peoples without writing systems, a distinction found in both ethnographic accounts of colonized peoples and literary attempts to preserve Scottish highland ballads and other products of what
were being recognized as "oral traditions" (McDowell, 2010), a sentiment found in anti-modern thinkers for instance—but also in Giambattista Vico's writings in Italy and Lord Monboddo and Dugald Stewart in Scotland (Heyer 1988; Siskin and Warner 2010). Philosophically speaking, Condillac (1746) challenged Locke's understanding and argued that speech and words are the source of mental life and knowledge, not vice versa, opening an early route toward the idea that communication helps constitute human worlds—an intellectual precursor to contemporary theories that has been unjustly neglected, and one echoed among Scots like Stewart and Thomas Reid (see Broadie 2005). Out of the Enlightenment, then, we see the modern origins of grander narratives of communication in history, fueling more-or-less ethnocentric progress tales of civilization and its media, and underwriting a reform-minded and forward-looking liberal politics with both individualistic and communitarian iterations.

Communication and History in the Nineteenth Century

A range of influential figures would extend the grander liberal progress narrative in the nineteenth century, working it out through philosophy as well as the emergent disciplines of political economy, sociology, and anthropology. Some modulated the progress teleology with ambivalence about the state of reading, print media, and actually existing public life in the present moment. John Stuart Mill’s *Civilization* (1836), for instance, continued the Enlightenment sorting of savages and slaves as cultural Others against which to define civilized peoples who had progressed through social cooperation, “the diffusion of reading, and the increase of the facilities of human intercourse” toward a democracy in which social intelligence was spread from the elites to the masses. That teleology, which for Mill issued in “the greatest ever recorded” social progress in history, also led to a present corrupted by “arts for attracting public attention,” newly literate masses with little interest in “the highest and most valuable order of books,” and questions about the state of reading. Print media, and actually existing public life in the present moment.

“Communication” was a standard term in nineteenth-century political economy, where it typically meant transportation and other kinds of material contact and exchange, initiating a tradition of communication history that would be among the most prominent into the twenty-first century, most famously through the Canadian Harold Innis (1894–1952, about whom more below). Operating in a context of major technological and systemic developments in transportation in Europe and the United States, nineteenth-century political economists yoked communications in this sense to progress as well. Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* (1848) was one such example, making the case that transport and commercial commerce were also powerful engines of historical development, the latter making up “the far greater part of the communication which takes place between civilized nations. Such communication has always been, and is particularly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress” (Mill [1848] 1909, paragraph III.17.14; see also Mattelart 1996, 58–60). Mill’s attention was primarily contemporary, but German historical economists like Karl Knies turned their attention to the recent and more distant past, writing books in the 1850s on the railroads and telegraph and reflecting more generally on the evolution of communication and society (Hardt 2001).

University in Lille (Oberholtzer 1896), were being offered on great journalists and publicists of the past. In England, Alexander Andrews’ *The History of British Journalism* ([1859] 1998) and H. R. Fox-Bourne’s *English Newspapers* (11887) 1998) catalogued publications, noted the accomplishments of prominent editors and publishers, and cast newspapers as agents of political progress (K. Williams 2010, 2); and George Carlske Thompson conducted a careful study of the recent past in *Public Opinion and Lord Beaconsfield*. 1875–1880 (2 vols. 1886), which Harold Lasswell would call a “pioneer effort to deal exhaustively with language in circulation through time in connection with world politics” (Lasswell, Casey, and Smith 1935, 195). In Germany, the political economist Karl Bücher began writing about the newspaper in the 1890s and by the 1910s was leading the way in the establishment of newspaper science (Zeitungswissenschaft), writing and teaching courses in the history, statistics, and economic organization of the newspaper paper system (Hardt 2001; Pietilk 2005; Lang 1996). At the University of Heidelberg in 1895, a course was offered on “The History of the Press and Journalism in Germany,” reportedly the first of its kind in that country (Oberholtzer 1896). Bücher’s *Industrial Evolution (1901)*, which included a chapter on the historical development of journalism, blended elements of grander political economic narrative with focused historical attention on one media institution. Over the next two decades, he would write a number of studies that made him one of the pioneers of press history in Germany.

Other, old and new, also came in for specific historical treatment in the late nineteenth century. The French historian Jules Fleury Champsaur (1847) explored the histories of ancient and modern caricatures and press illustrations. Isaac Taylor published his landmark history of writing, *The Alphabet* (1883), and M. Philippe Berger followed suit with his *Histoire de l’écriture dans l’antiquité* (History of Writing in Antiquity, 1892). Soon after, Lorenzo Sears (1896) and Henry Hardwicke (1896) published histories of oratory that pushed that ancient genre of communication history forward into a new cultural moment. Declaring “Oratory is the parent of liberty” and arguing that free states had the duty of fostering it (v), Hardwicke struck a civic republican note that emphasized the need to bring past communicative excellence to bear on the present. At the end of the nineteenth century, then, liberal progress narratives dominated the telling of communication’s history, but civic republicanism, socialism, and Catholicism also ideologically informed the cross-disciplinary practice.

**COMMUNICATION HISTORY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY**

“Communication” would become a central term and concept in the twentieth century (Peters 1999)—one connected with a series of other, related terms that included dialogue, conversation, information, propaganda, public opinion, public relations, journalism, media, mass communication, and technology. As they grew in importance in the vocabularies of both scholars and ordinary people, such terms also stocked historical thinking and investigation. The increased attention was driven by a number of factors including the onslaught of propaganda in World War I (see Mortensen, chapter 19, this volume), the rise of public relations after the war, and accelerating attention to the questions about the public and public opinion from that point forward. Technology and new media also played major roles in the emergence of radio broadcasting as the latest in a series of new electric media dating back to the telegraph in the 1840s, collectively altering the shape of social communication and the popular arts, and drawing attention to the seeming revolution in communication technologies (see Peters and Nielsen, chapter 14, this volume).

Print remained the medium through which histories were told, but beginning in the 1920s, they began to take shape within a new, electronic broadcast age.

**Communication History as Press/Journalism History, 1900–1930s**

At the turn of the twentieth century, with the possible exception of political economic histories of transportation and communications, newspaper and journalism history was the best established subfield of what we are retroactively characterizing as “communication history.” Such research found some space within a number of disciplinary formations, including U.S. and French sociology, German Zeitungswissenschaft, and university-based journalism education in other professionalizing national contexts. Though his attention was primarily contemporary, the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (who after 1900 lectured at the Collège de France) wrote important and lasting conceptual work on public opinion, conversation, and the newspaper as features of modern, liberal societies. In the United States, at the University of Michigan, Charles Cooley similarly cast his sociological theory of communication within a historical narrative about modernity. At the far more influential University of Chicago, meanwhile, the sociologist George E. Vincent began teaching a course entitled “The History and Organization of the American Press” in 1903 (Vincent 1905), initiating a tradition that Robert Park and others would energetically advance in the 1920s and ‘30s and contributing to the formation of a sociological paradigm that cast communication as a fundamental component of society. Park (1923) charted what he called “the natural history of the newspaper” over time, and, along with students such as Helen McGill Hughes (1940), brought a broadly evolutionary framework to bear in understanding the relationships between news, culture, and society over time. Other media, old and new, also came in for specific historical treatment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. At the University of Wisconsin’s Willard Bleyer published *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* (1924), a detailed chronology of the press and its major figures (Lee 1917). The University of Wisconsin’s Willard Bleyer published *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* a decade later, the same year (1927) that his department of journalism opened its School of Journalism four years earlier, the first such institution in the United States. Meanwhile, the sociologist Charles Cooley wrote the first major book on the sociology of the press, *The Negro Problem* in the United States (Kerlin 1920: see also Simpson 1936; Baijai and Crittenden, chapter 21, this volume). Sociologists at Columbia University also studied new methods of content analysis with studies of institutions, opinion, and socialization among other topics, sometimes situating their object of study in historical perspective—for instance, Malcolm Willey’s (1926) study of the country newspaper during the Civil War.

Running parallel with the sociological studies of the news, newly professionalizing programs in journalism education and European newspaper science also cast their attention toward the history of the press. In Europe and North America, history was part of journalism curricula, functioning at once as orientation, legitimating genealogy, guide to contemporary practice, and, for a few, an object of study in its own right (see Nerone, chapter 10, this volume). In the United States, where the internationally influential Walter Williams founded the first journalism school in 1908 and founded his School of Journalism four years later, the first textbook appeared in 1917, a detailed chronology of the press and its major figures (Lee 1917). The University of Wisconsin’s Willard Bleyer published *Main Currents in the History of American Journalism* a decade later, the same year (1927) that his department of journalism became a soon-to-be influential school of our own that would go on to sponsor a grand deal of historical research. Bleyer wrote the kind of journalism history subsequently rejected by sociologist Alfred McClung Lee, whose *Daily Newspaper in America: The Evolution of a Social Instrument* (1937) argued that “person social forces were far more important than heroic individuals in determining both the course of history and shaping the development of newspapers” (Gallihet and Gallihet 1995, 53). Lee opened his book with the charge that the “great man theory of history” prevalent in existing accounts of U.S. press history was “scarcely less naive than the savage’s recourse to magical explanation” (1937, 1). Lee earned distrust from journalism educators, practitioners and publishers, and his book never won wide acceptance in American journalism programs—an early indication of tensions that would continue to haunt an educational mission devoted to the dual tasks of professional training and scholarly research, and in the process shoo up paradigm differences
between sociologists and journalism schools. Journalism education would instead look to Frank Luther Mott’s American Journalism (1941), a voluminous study that followed his three-volume History of American Magazines (which won the Pulitzer Prize in history in 1939) and that through subsequent editions would be the standard text for U.S. journalism history, later epitomizing what James Carey (1974) would criticize as an outdated “Whig model” of press history.

In Germany, France, and other European countries, humanistic, and to a lesser extent, social scientific scholars began to institutionalize studies of the press in universities, offer courses in press history, and published books and journal articles on the subject. Karl Bücher, who established the first European institute for press study, the Institut für Zeitungswissenschaften (Institute for Newspaper Science) at the University of Leipzig in 1916, published a series of studies of press history (collected in Bücher 1926) and taught courses in the subject. Kurt Baschwitz, among a relatively few scholars who tried to open the traditionally humanities-oriented Zeitungswissenschaft to sociology and psychology in the 1920s (on which, see Averbeck 1999), fled Nazi Germany in 1935 and began teaching press history at the University of Amsterdam in 1935, where he became one of the first faculty appointed to the Dutch Institute for the Science of the Press (begun 1947) and founded one of the first international journals of communication, Gazette, in 1955 (Wieten 2005). In France, meanwhile, press studies took place within faculties of law; the first research and teaching institute, the Institut de science de la presse was founded by the jurist Fernand Terron in 1927, and history was part of its curriculum.

A few scholars began breaking out of strictly national narratives and cast their attention in global directions. The French historian Georges Weill (1934) was among the leaders, publishing a history of the press in world perspective and treating journalism as part of the general history of civilization. The Swedish historian Gunnar Bjurman’s Tredje statsnationen (The Third Estate, 1935) and Baschwitz’s De krant door alle tijden (The Press of All Times, 1936) also pushed press history in global directions as part of an interwar moment that also saw historians establishing bibliographies of international newspapers as invaluable historical sources (Jarye 1943).

If journalism history often took shape within a narrative of liberal democratic progressive (particularly in the U.S.), interwar propaganda studies drew attention to the darker side of moder communication. Propaganda research emerged in the United States in the 1920s and ’30s as a field that cut across academic and public realms of practice (Sproule 1997)—a development whose German version has recently been told as well (Daniel 2010). Most of this research concerned communication in history. One occurred through Terrón’s above-mentioned press institute (after World War II renamed the Institut français de presse et des sciences de l’information)—“information” being the preferred organizing term in France and Spain instead of the American-originating “communication”). Others operated more individually. The American philosopher Richard McKeon, a former student of John Dewey’s, studied medieval thought with Guénolé Girson in Paris from 1922–1925, stoking his historical perspectives on the way that he would later bend toward the historical institute of rhetoric and communication (McKeon [1953] 1990), a point we return to below. Another American, the classicist Milman Parry, drew upon the insights of the French linguist Antoine Meillet in a 1928 thesis he wrote at the Sorbonne, which cast Homer as the product of an oral culture—an argument that would influence a later generation of communication-based histories of antiquity and fuel both historical and contemporary studies of orality (McDowell 2010). A year later, historians Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch launched a new journal, Annales d’Histoire Économique et Sociale, dedicated to a style of historical research that encompassed economy, society, culture, psychology, and geography. This marked the beginning of what would become the French Annales School and the histoire totale (total history) approach that would exert wide-ranging influence on social, cultural, and economic history over the next five decades, including work in the 1980s on the history of the book (see Burke 1990, Burniere 2009; Zboray and Zboray, chapter 9, this volume). As early as 1941, Febvre turned his attention to lecture patterns as social praxis in his essay “Littérature et vie sociale.” Later, he would publish a major history of printing (Febvre and Martin 1958).
year the couple founded the critical journal Scrutiny. Queenie (or Q.D.) Roth’s (1932–1965) study was sociological and cultural, getting to the present by way of an historical excursion into the birth of English journalism, the Puritan conscience, the growth and disintegration of the reading public, and the economic developments contributing to it. That book reflected the values of Scrutiny, which Terry Eagleton has described as “[d]iminutive of mere ‘literary’ values,” insisting “that how one evaluated literary works was deeply bound up with deeper judgments about the nature of history and society as a whole” (1983, 33; see also Williams 1958, 252–64 and 1961). This was a way of thinking that could be applied to a culture and historical moment as a whole, as F.R. Leavis and Denys Thompson showed in Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness (1933), a fascinating literary-rhetorical primer for decoding contemporary advertising contextualized against the folkways and traditions of the “organic community” of the pre-industrial past. Richards worked in a more systematic, philosophical style, and Scrutiny would criticize him harshly, but he too was a critic of what his biographer calls the “unwitting conspiracy between mass media and mass education” (Russo 1989, 296, 534–40; cf. F.R. Leavis 1930). In the mid-1930s, Richards turned his attention to “the first three liberal arts”—the trivium of rhetoric, grammar, and logic—and theorized a “new rhetoric” that would break with the discredited tradition (see Richards 1991).

In addition to its own historical work, Cambridge literary studies birthed an influential cadre of students. Among those was a young Canadian influenced by both the Leavisites and Richards, Marshall McLuhan (in residence there 1934–36), who would write a dissertation on the history of the trivium, teach “culture and environment”–type criticism, and soon develop his own theory of media in history (Marchand 1989). A young working-class Welshman, Raymond Williams, would begin his undergraduate studies at Cambridge in 1939, resume them after the war, and subsequently establish himself with a book, Culture and Society (1958) that dialectically moved the Leaviste approach into the orbit of British cultural Marxism and catalyzed another major approach to communication history, about which more below (Dworkin 1997). Another member of his cohort, Ian Watt, whose education was similarly interrupted by the war, would also absorb the Leavisite socio-cultural orientation and influentially extend it in the 1950s and ’60s (e.g., Watt 1957; Goody and Watt 1963).

Across the Atlantic, Cornell University’s Department of Oratory and Debate was offering a year-long minimum course in classical rhetoric as the core of a program in rhetoric that would deeply influence the humanistic field of speech (later, speech communication) in the United States. Speech had arisen as a field in the 1910s out of English departments and what was left of the teachers of oratory and rhetoric that had populated American colleges throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When it began in 1920, Cornell’s seminar was the first of its kind in the United States and went on to set the tone for a faculty and graduate students who carried on often very high-quality historical work on rhetoric and oratory. At Cornell and elsewhere, scholars wrote and taught about the history of American, British, Greek, and Roman oratory and the history of rhetoric as an intellectual discipline. Cornell’s Lane Cooper (who had taken his doctorate in philosophy in Germany) translated Aristotle’s Rhetoric (1932), helping feed a revival of teaching and learning figures in the field of speech, many of whom turned their direction to the criticism and close textual analysis of historical speeches and rhetorical texts (Benson 2003). In 1934, the National Association of Teachers of Speech (which would eventually become today’s National Communication Association) launched a history of American public address, which was published a decade later and framed as a study of the “men who have used words to direct the course of American history” (Brigance 1943, vii). It was a classic “great man” version of communication history, at the opposite pole of the methodological spectrum from the total history of the Annales school or the cultural and sociological history of the Leavisites, and the oratorical counterpart to the studies of great editors and writers that American journalism historians were studying at the time. Functionally, however, Cornell school rhetorical-orratorical history served analogous anti-modern purposes as the Leavises’ project, tonally aiming to recover great moments and texts from the past as a point from which to live in a modernizing, mass communicating world.

The Historical Centrality of Communication and Media, 1930s–50s

Instead of ignoring the broadcast age like the bulk of Cornell’s work, other scholars absorbed it, with the new medium of radio broadcasting cueing a number of important affirmations of communication’s social centrality and place in human history. The American historian Robert Albion (1932) introduced the idea of the “Communication Revolution” to make sense of the transformative changes brought about through developments in transport and media since the early nineteenth century—initiating a line of work on communication revolutions pursued by subsequent American historians (see John 1994) and, more recently, historians of Europe, too (Behringer 2006). Edward Sapir compactly advanced the anthropological take on this story in his excellent entry on communication in the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences (1931–2003), a general view echoed in Robert Park’s claim that “fundamental inventions like the alphabet, the printing press, the newspaper, and the radio … each may be said to mark an epoch in the history of communication, and … characterizes the culture of which it is a part” (1936, 172). Malcolm Willey expressed a growing sentiment when he wrote, “It is the ‘revolution’ of mass communication that distinguishes our century from earlier periods in the history of communication” (1935, 197). No epochal history of the 1930s went further than Lewis Mumford’s Technics and Civilization (1934). “During the last thousand years the material basis and the cultural forms of Western Civilization have been profoundly modified by the development of the machine,” it began, showing that it was not only the Annales historians who were interested in the longue durée (3). With chapters on the clock, social regimentation, and the mechanical universe, it became a classic in the history of technology and new media (see Peters and Nielsen, chapter 14, this volume). Operating in very different and even more influential intellectual waters, the Austrian giant Sigmund Freud continued to mix psychoanalysis with long-duration history in books like Moses and Monotheism (1939), which blended the idea of a “great man” with the influence of the “network” (171), tradition, and the collective dynamics of memory, repetition, and repression—all of which would open up new vistas for thinking about communication in history. Meanwhile, geographers in the 1930s continued to write about “the history of communications,” meaning the study of roads and other transportation systems, and continuing elements of the older political economic tradition.

No one extended that older tradition into communication history more influentially than the Canadian Harold Innis, whose grander-scale history mapped the relationship of communication to social, political, and economic organization over long historical time. Studying economic history at the University of Chicago, Innis wrote a dissertation on the history of the Canadian Pacific Railway (published 1923), then moved to the University of Toronto, where he investigated the role of transportation and communication systems in Canada’s political-economic development (Heyer 2003). His resulting economic histories of the nation’s fur trade (1930) and fisheries (1940) prepared the ground for Innis’s wide-ranging excursions, in the 1940s, into the relationship of social order and means of communication. Out of that research grew his innovative argument about the centrality of communication to processes of historical change laid out in Empire and Communications (1950) and The Bias of Communication (1951), his two most influential works. They pushed forward the holistic nineteenth-century political economic nexus of transportation, communication, and history and introduced fertile theoretical concepts like “time” and “space-binding” media (see Buxton and Acland 1999).
Innis’ highly original work influenced a school of thought organized around an interdisciplinary group of scholars at the University of Toronto, retroactively termed “the Toronto School” of communication (Theall 1986; DeKerckhove 1989; Katz et al. 2003; Blondheim 2007). More than any other center for communication and media study in the mid-twentieth century, the Toronto group emphasized history and questions of culture. Its most famous member was the literary critic Marshall McLuhan, who finally completed his Cambridge dissertation in 1946, focused on Renaissance England and the history of the liberal arts trivium of rhetoric, grammar, and logic (McLuhan 2006). Between Cambridge and Toronto, McLuhan (a Catholic convert) taught at the Jesuit St. Louis University, where he directed the 1941 M.A. thesis of Walter Ong, and got Ong interested in a semi-obscure Renaissance logician—a line of curiosity that eventuated in Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue (Ong 1958), a deep intellectual history of print-based logic and the transformation from auditory to visual modes of apprehending reality (Marchand 1989, 59). McLuhan moved to the University of Toronto in 1946, met and was influenced by Innis, and then carried on some of his lines of thinking after Innis’ untimely death in 1952. He teamed with the anthropologist Edmund Carpenter and others interested in questions of communication, culture, and history. They explored themes of orality and literacy that the classicist Eric Havelock paired with the versatile theorist and pioneer of historical sociology, Robert K. Merton. Don, e.g., Merton, Curtis, and Fiske 1946; McVansfeld and Merton (1948), and in his most fully articulated vision for the field he expressly called for historical studies of the effects of media ina communications. Perhaps the first library classification for communication as an academic field he expressly called for historical studies of the effects of media ina communications. Perhaps the first library classification for communication as an academic field in the postwar years, taking up a spectrum of attitudes toward history across its different lineages. By the 1930s, the term “communication theory” was used by electrical engineers with reference to mathematical theories of signal coding and transmission. This rather technical field exploded into widespread prominence after the publication of Norbert Wiener’s Cybernetics (1948) and Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver’s The Mathematical Theory of Communication (1949). The ground for an enthusiastic interdisciplinary reception had been prepared in part by the Macy cybernetics conferences, a series of meetings involving prominent social scientists, psychologists, biologists, mathematicians, and engineers that began in 1946 (Heim 1991). Wiener was a central figure in the Macy conferences and Shannon attended several meetings. Weaver, a mathematician-scientist and Rockefeller Foundation executive, wrote a non-technical introduction to The Mathematical Theory of Communication, the remainder of which presented Shannon’s mathematical theory. The book was published by the University of Illinois Press under the direction of Wilbur Schramm, who was a leading figure in instituting communication as a social science discipline (Rogers 1994; Chafee and Rogers 1997).

While communication theory continued to refer to mathematical theories of information, a broader sense was emerging in which communication theory also included relevant ideas from a range of other disciplines. Plato’s and Aristotle’s ancient writings on rhetoric could be regarded as “classic theories of communication” (Oates 1948). Bernard Berelson and Morris Janowitz (1950, 143) noted that “[c]ontributions to a theory of communication have been made by workers in various fields—philosophy, sociology, anthropology, political science, psychology.” Interdisciplinarity and theoretical eclecticism were justified by historical glosses on the growing urgency and complexity of communication problems in society, problems that exceeded the scope of any one discipline, along with visions of a future in which a new science of communication would eventually progress beyond eclecticism to produce “a comprehensive theoretical structure” of its own (Hovland 1948, 374). At least by the mid-1950s, communication theory could refer to a new academic field that would integrate the traditional disciplines (e.g., Hefferline 1955).

Beyond celebratory glosses, this forward-looking new social science did not reflect much on the history of communication’s emergence as a thematic or intellectual interest across disciplines. Outside the field, though, University of Chicago philosopher Richard McKeon (1957) sketched a broad historical and philosophical context for the development. For McKeon, historical ages could be characterized by their fundamental ways of posing problems. Like the age of Cicero and that of the European Renaissance, but for different reasons, the present age was one in which “all problems can be stated as problems of communication,” and “[the vague of ‘communication’ today is no accident, but rather a response to the problems we face” (91) in a complex modern society. Historicism had its champions. In contrast to McKeon’s liberal progressivism, the German-born philosopher Hannah Arendt argued in The Human Condition (1958) that the modern world had collapsed the public into the social, extinguishing the possibility for action and speech that she saw existing in the ancient Greek polis. Here was a variation on civic republican communication history, inflected with her teacher Martin Heidegger’s foundational insight that language is the house of being.

Both humanistic and social scientific branches of American speech and communication research began in the 1950s to develop historical narratives of themselves as academic fields. Constructing a disciplinary identity, particularly for humanistic disciplines but by no means limited to them, often uses a reconstructed past to claim epistemological authority (Graham, Lepenies, and
visions of the communication/society relationship that had roots in literature, sociology, social theory, history, and philosophy. On the American scene, Kenneth Burke (1935, 1937, 1945, 1950) offered a communication-centered theory of social reality through which struggles in/over symbolic and material resources could be understood as the “organizing principle” of history—a position with obvious parallels to the position Antonio Gramsci worked out in the 1920s and ‘30s on the historical role of the struggle for hegemony, which would be appropriated by British cultural studies in the 1970s. In France, the Annales impulse toward total history yielded L’apparition du Lévre (1958) by Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin—an account of the development of print in Europe that wove together economics, politics, technology, sociology, and anthropology. Meanwhile, the field of “information” developed in France and elsewhere on the Continent in the 1950s, broadly concentrating on the study of “content” (contenu) and not on the media that carried or “contained” it (contenant)—a development reflecting the continuing influence of literary and legal studies on the field; “media” and “communication” studies would arrive later there.

In Great Britain in the late 1950s and early ‘60s, the desire to unite interdisciplinary analysis and social critique by situating communication, culture, and media in historical context paved the way for a new way of understanding the relationship of history, communication, culture, and society. British cultural studies was the product of a specific historical context: the rise in the late 1950s of New Left political and social movements and a corresponding culturalist shift within Marxist theory that rejected the view that culture (including forms and practices of communication and media) was merely epiphenomenal, and held instead that culture was both historical product (constituted) and historically productive (constitutive) (Dworkin 1997; Peck 2001). The early work of three figures who would come to be identified as “founders” of cultural studies was clearly influenced by this evolving view of culture. In The Uses of Literacy (1957), Richard Hoggart combined autobiography and the tools of his home discipline, literary studies, to draw connections between emerging forms of mass mediated culture and broader social changes in twentieth-century Britain. In Culture and Society (1958) and The Long Revolution (1961), literary historian and critic Raymond Williams sought to understand the rise of industrial capitalism by considering the forms of communication and cultural production—the press, education, advertising, novels—that were integral to that history. And E. P. Thompson’s The Making of the English Working Class (1963), which made its focus active, creative character of working-class cultural practices and forms of expression, played a seminal role in the rise of social history, or “history from below,” that would flourish in the 1960s and ‘70s. The 1964 founding of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies—directed first by Hoggart (with Stuart Hall as his assistant), and then by Hall when Hoggart departed in 1971 to become Assistant Director-General of UNESCO—was a key moment in what Dan Schiller terms the “opening toward culture” (1996, 88) in the trajectory of communication studies. Drawing on its foundational disciplines—history, literary criticism, and sociology—the “Birmingham School” would go on to influence the study of culture, communication, media, and society across a wide range of disciplines, less by producing historical research proper than by emphasizing the importance of historical consciousness and context in cultural analysis.

The leftward political shift in British communication and culture studies in the late 1950s through the ‘60s took place against the backdrop of political developments worldwide. The Suez Canal crisis and the Hungarian uprising against the Soviet Union—both in 1956—have been cited as key moments in the rise of the British New Left. That same year, the UNESCO general conference endorsed the promotion of coordinated national research institutes devoted to the study of mass communication. Out of that directive grew the creation in 1957 of the International Association of Mass Communication Research (IAMCR), whose first president was Fernand
Terrou, founder and director of France’s Institut de science de la presse. Over the next two decades, UNESCO would become a base of support for IAMCR—itself an international home for sorts for critical communications research, including historical and historically-informed work (Nordenstreng 2004). The association, which grew initially from the political, historical, and legal study of the press in the European tradition, founded a permanent Historical Research section in 1959, the first of all the major associations to do so. Its first head was the University of Trieste’s Giuliano Gaeta, a member of the Italian resistance during World War II, who wrote numerous historical studies of the press and public opinion, Italian colonialism, war, and revolution (e.g., Gaeta 1938, 1943, 1948, 1951–55).

These complementary developments on multiple scholarly fronts helped make the early 1960s a notable moment in the interdisciplinary study of communication history—though not much of it from the ensemble of communication disciplines. Across much of the globe, television had become a fact of life, and the march of new media technologies continued, sewing interest in communication as a central social and cultural force and sharpening awareness of past media epochs (“print culture,” for instance, had just been coined as a term by Mary Flora and Zberay, chapter 9, this volume). The year 1962 has been called one “of astonishing international convergence on questions of communication” (Peters and Simonson 2004, 272), with the publication of a number of signal works on the subject, many of which took up questions of history. Among them were Habermas’s Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, McLuhan’s Gutenberg Galaxy, Eric Havelock’s Preface to Plato, Daniel Boorstin’s The Image, and Jacques Ellul’s Propaganda (see also Ellul 1967). Williams’ Long Revolution had come out the previous year, just as the French journal Communications, founded in 1961 by semiotician Roland Barthes and others, was publishing its first issues. Cambridge social anthropologist Jack Goody and the Leavis-trained literary historian Ian Watt were working on their influential article, “The Consequences of Literacy” (1963), pushing the tradition of anthropological communication history forward; and the American classicist George Kennedy was publishing The Art of Persuasion in Greece (1963) and launching a career that would make him the leading authority on the history of rhetoric. Leo Marks’ Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Idea in America (1964) appeared the next year, carrying on a tradition of linking the history of technology to the history of culture and advancing the “myth and symbol” school of American studies that would influence James W. Carey, among others. Two major efforts in broadcast history also appeared at the time, with Asa Briggs publishing the first of his five-volume history of British broadcasting in 1961, and Erik Barnouw launching his three-volume American counterpart five years later. Their respective projects established radio and television history as serious scholarly endeavors and laid foundations for the media histories that would come out in greater number two decades later, increasingly written by scholars working within the fields of communication and media studies.

COMMUNICATION HISTORY SINCE THE 1970s: THE EMERGENCE OF AN ACADeMIC FIELD

Beginning in the 1970s, the interdisciplinary effervescence in communication history that had started a decade earlier began making its way into communication, journalism, the emerging formation called “media studies,” and other related or soon-to-be-related fields and research areas. New histories and new historical consciousness bloomed, setting in motion a series of intellectual and institutional developments that would eventually lead to a nascent, collectively self-conscious formation gathering under the sign of “communication history” itself. That story is complex, and like other mappings in this chapter, can be sketched in only the most basic ways. But in general
and critiqued older ones by mobilizing Kuhnian language—critical (Gitlin 1978) and objective (Rogers 1976; Rossiter 1977) communication social scientists as well as rhetorical humanists (Scott and Brock 1972; Frentz and Farrell 1976)—to draw attention to the American case.

New, critically-inflected social and sociological histories of communication appeared in the 1970s, many coming out of studies of news and journalism. At London’s City University, sociologist Jeremy Tunstall followed two important studies of contemporary journalism (1970b, 1971) with The Media Are American (1977), a trenchant critical analysis of the history and contemporary political economy of international media imperialism (see Sinclair, chapter 24, this volume). Tunstall’s 1970 reader, Media Sociology, had opened space for approaches outside the mainstream of American-style mass communications research, including historical ones. It included one of the earliest essays by James Curran (1970), a young Cambridge-trained historian who taught in the UK’s first BA program in Media Studies (founded in 1975 at the Polytechnic of Central London) and went on to publish trailblazing Marxist-inflected social histories of the press in Great Britain (Curran 1977; Boyce, Curran, and Wing 1978; Curran 1981). Over the course of more than four decades, he would publish widely on media history and become one of the most influential figures in media studies in Great Britain, helping to found and institutionalize that field. In contrast, though they operated with the historicist framework of cultural Marxism, Stuart Hall and other members of the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies did far less in the way of actual historical research.

Social History of Communicative Means and Forms, 1970–80s

British and American historians of Early Modern Europe turned their attention to communication, print, and the history of the book in the 1970s and ‘80s, helping to further establish the Renaissance and Enlightenment as fertile periods for communication history. The tradition extended back through McLuhan’s and Ong’s studies of the 1940s and ‘50s, and continued through signal works like the British historian Frances Yates’ classic The Art of Memory (1966), among others. In 1979, the American Elizabeth Eisenstein—who has preliminary studies (1968, 1969) of the history of the printing press—published in a provocative but cavalier manner in The Gutenberg Galaxy—published her two-volume The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, a major work in the history of print culture (Zboray and Zboray, chapter 9, this volume; see also Eisenstein 2002, 2011; Johns 2002). The same year, the Oxford-trained American historian of France, Robert Darnton, whose first book looked at eighteenth-century mimesis, published his own signal study of print, a cultural history of the publishing of Diderot’s Encyclopédie (Darnton [1968] 1986, 1979). These works extended the longer French histoire du livre and laid the foundation for the history of the book as a vibrant field of study over the three decades (on which, see Blair 2011). Also in 1979, the British social historian Peter Burke, who had edited a volume of the writings of the Annales school’s Lucien Febvre (Burke 1973), called for a new “social history of communication,” which he would go on to pursue over the next three decades, attending to language, speech, and conversation in addition to written and print media (e.g., Burke and Porter 1987; Burke and Briggs 2005; Burke, chapter 6, this volume).

In the United States, the new social and sociological histories helped transform the history of journalism, news, and other media. The Harvard-trained sociologist Michael Schudson (who has spent most of his academic life teaching in communication and journalism programs) brought social and cultural history to bear in his now-classic history of objectivity in American journalism, Discovering the News (1978), followed shortly by Dan Schiller’s critical historical study, Objectivity and the News (1981), and David Paul Nord’s Newspapers and New Politics (1981).

Excavating a more recent past, media sociologist Todd Gitlin followed his withering 1978 critique of “the dominant paradigm” of the so-called limited-effects model of mass communication (see Simonson 2013) with his own now-classic study of the 1960s American student left and news coverage of it, The Whole World is Watching (Gitlin 1980). Some of the new social history found its way into the journal Journalism History, launched in 1974. Looking to Innis, McLuhan, Eisenstein, and James W. Carey, the South-African-born, Canadian-raised, American trained historian Garth Jowett made a pair of programmatic pleas for a new, theoretically sophisticated communications history (1975, 1976a) and published a pioneering social history of American film (1976b). In the same period in France, the five volumes of Histoire Générale de la Presse Française (ed. Bellanger et al. 1969–1976) were published over a seven-year span, marking the first comprehensive scholarly account of French press history since the dawn of the twentieth century.

Working most of his career at the University of Illinois, James Carey provided a major spur to both the new journalism histories and the history of communication more generally. Carey had begun writing about Harold Innis and Marshall McLuhan in the mid-1960s, a bridge toward a series of important historically hued studies of the communications revolution (Carey 1969) and the cultural myths of the electronic revolution (Carey and Quirk 1970). As the lead article in the first issue of Journalism History, Carey published “The Problem with Journalism History,” a milestone essay advocating a cultural history which at its most ambitious would “capture that reflexive process wherein modern consciousness” was both created through and found institutional expression in journalism (Carey [1974] 1997, 93). Schudson (1997) has nicely contextualized Carey’s important essay, which came in a highly productive period of Carey’s intellectual life—as he was bringing history and theory together into a cultural approach to communication, intellectually indebted to an eclectic blend of American pragmatism, Innis and Canadian medium theory, the “myth and symbol” school of American studies, Raymond Williams, and the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (see Carey 1975, and the essays collected in Carey 1989/2009, 1997). Through both writings and teaching in influential U.S. graduate programs, Carey has exerted considerable influence on American communication history since the 1970s.

Cultural History and Social Identity, 1980s–90s

If the 1960s–70s were social history’s “golden age,” cultural history took center stage in the 1980s, with Carey providing one base for it within the field of communication. Across its disciplinary manifestations in history, literary studies, and other fields, cultural history cast attention toward representations, symbols, meanings, rituals, and discourses. “Cultural history” functions as a sort of conceptual umbrella: disciplinarily malleable, both theoretically and methodologically, it allows practitioners to conceive any human practice in textual terms and submit all manner of such “texts” to narrative, semiotic, and discursive analysis. Different iterations of it were influenced by Anglo-American cultural anthropology (particularly the work of Geertz [1973], Victor Turner [1974] and Mary Douglas [1966]), by Michel Foucault’s archaeological and genealogical histories (1965, 1973, 1970, 1978), by other French poststructuralist theory, and by the cultural Marxism of Birmingham-style cultural studies. Its conceptual flexibility and disciplinary promiscuity facilitated cultural history’s growth. Carey would influence a number of important cultural histories of media, including Daniel Czitrom’s Media and the American Mind (1983), Catherine Corvett and John Stevens’ Mass Media Between the Wars (1984), and Carolyn Marvin’s When Old Technologies Were New (1988). Within American studies, cultural historian Warren Susman’s essays on the twentieth-century culture of abundance, collected in Culture as History (1984), exerted influence on a range of other cultural histories of American media, including Michael Denning’s (1987) widely read study of dime novels and working-class culture. George
Lipsitz (1988) also weighed in on the cultural history of media from the perspective of American studies, and went on to publish a series of important studies of popular culture, identity, and collective representation (see esp. 1990).

Cultural historians of communication in the 1980s and ’90s drew attention to the categories of race, class, and gender, picking up topics that had become central in the social transformations of the 1960s and ’70s. In the wake of the second wave of the women’s movement that emerged in the 1960s, coupled with the influence of social history’s commitment to explore previously untold or marginalized stories, feminist communication history took off in the 1970s and would become firmly established by the 1990s (see Ross, chapter 20, this volume). Though primarily focused on the present, Gaye Tuchman also drew attention to history in her ringing “The Symbolic Annihilation of Women by the Mass Media,” the introductory chapter to her co-edited volume on images of women in the media (Tuchman, Daniels, and Benet 1978). Carolyn Gorry (1979) wed feminist theory to social and intellectual history in her study of the seventeenth-century French salon as a female cultural institution, while Marion Marzolf (1977) added the story of women to the history of journalism (1977). In rhetorical studies, Karlyn Kohrs Campbell (1989) capped nearly two decades of work with a book-length study of nineteenth century women’s rights orators in the United States, while other feminist historians went on to rewrite the long history of the Western rhetorical tradition and women rhetors (e.g., Lunsford 1995; Glenn 1997; Wertheimer 1997). Moving into the ’90s and beyond, Lynn Spigel (1992, 2001), Susan Douglas (1994) and Kathy Peiss (2001) produced acclaimed feminist histories of television, popular film, music, and amusements. Alexandra Juhasz (2001) contributed a history of feminism and feminist film from the 1950s through the 1990s; Donna Halper (2001) offered a social history of women in American broadcasting; and Deborah Chambers, Linda Steiner, and Carole Fleming (2004) did the same.

A key theme of the 1970s was, in some quarters, a mounting skepticism toward “grand” or “meta” historical narratives coupled with the elevation of “microhistories.” Among those affected by that paradigmatic shift were scholars working in the French Annales School tradition. Because Annales’ historie totale approach included the world view of the common people, captured by the category mentalité, it had been compatible with the “bottom up” approach of new social history; accordingly, mentalité studies proliferated in the 1970s and early ’80s. Faced with the growing influence of cultural history, however, Annales historians began questioning the earlier approach, as demonstrated in Roger Chartier’s Cultural History: Between Practices and Representations (1988). The paradigmatic shift from mentalité to discours is clear in Chartier’s subsequent work in the 1990s on the history of reading and books, where the title, The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries, 1400-1800 (1994) intentionally echoes that of Foucault’s The Order of Things (1970).

Media Systems, Institutions, and Publics, 1980s–90s

Also drawing from Foucault (as well as from French psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan), but lacking any of cultural studies’ skepticism about knowledge claims or grand narratives, the German literary scholar Friedrich Kittler began carving out a distinctive, anti-humanist history and theory of media in the mid-1980s. Turning from earlier studies of German romanticism, he mapped dramatic discontinuities in history and human experience brought about by systems of writing/inscription (Kittler, [1985] 1990) and other media technologies (Kittler 1986, 1999, 1999, 2010). Merging Foucault’s idea of discourses with media systems, Kittler analyzed transformations in communication since the 1700s. Drawn to Claude Shannon’s mathematical theory of communication, which factored out meaning and context in favor of probabilities and information systems, Kittler wrote a kind of media history where humans played little part (Winthrop-Young and Kane 2006; Peters 2010; Winthrop-Young 2011). Addressing topics like storage, transport, control, and human evolution, while casting attention back to orality, literacy, and ancient empire, Kittler struck chords that had been playing from eighteenth-century speculative philosophy and philology through the political economy, anthropology, and Canadian-style medium theory of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Adding Shannon’s information theory, Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory, and Jains toward Habermas and strands of Humanism gave Kittler’s communication history a new twist (see e.g., Kittler 1996).

Meanwhile, the principal commitments of the Toronto School—a strong historical grounding, interdisciplinary orientation, attention to media writ large, and focus on the intersection of communication and culture—continued to shape scholarship on communication history in the 1980s and beyond, especially in North America. Former McLuhan scholar Donald Theall (1971, 2001) became head of Canada’s McGill University’s graduate program in communications and began sewing the seeds of the Toronto School’s vision of communication history in a new generation (Fekete 2008). Walter Ong’s Orality and Literacy (1982) continued his religiously inflected take on historically-grounded medium theory, while The Alphabet and the Brain (DeCerckhove and Lumsden 1988) explored relations between the development of alphabetic writing and human cognition. The Toronto School also informed the work of Neil Postman (1985, 1992) and Joshua Meyrowitz (1986)—both representatives of the
subfield of American media ecology, which has often cast its analyses in historical relief. And the Canadian legacy of the Toronto approach is well represented in David Crowley and Paul Heyer’s reader, Communication and History (1991/2011), now in its 6th edition, and in their chapter in this volume (chapter 2; see also Robinson, 2004). Additionally, the 1980s also brought important studies of seventeenth-century transatlantic communication, migration, and transport by professional historians (Steele 1986; Cressy 1987). Despite certain affinities between Kittler’s work and North American media ecology, Habermas was by far the more influential German export. The 1989 translation of his Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere catalyzed a plethora of interdisciplinary inquiry into the history, theory, and contemporary state of public spheres around the world (see Batsch, Seethaler, chapters 4 and 17, this volume). Historical treatments of publics and public opinion trailed a longer lineage, dating back to the nineteenth century. Since the 1980s, they have seen something of a revival. The second volume of Harold Lasswell, Daniel Lerner, and Hans Speier’s Propaganda and Communication in World History (3 vols., 1979–80)—an ambitious collection aspiring to view intellectual and political history through the lens of “communication” that seems to have fallen mostly on deaf ears—addressed the emergence of public opinion in the West, German public opinion pollster and theorist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann published The Spiral of Silence (1984), blending history, theory, and empirical research into a controversial paradigm that critics would tie to her Nazi past (e.g., Simpson 1996). Trawling different waters, Jean Converse (1987) exquisitely traced the history of methods and institutions of public opinion and survey research, sticking out new ground in the history of the field of communication in the process; later work in this tradition would examine how survey research created the mass public (Igo 2007). Susan Herbst charted the cultural and political history of public opinion and its representations in a pair of book-length studies (1994, 1995). And working in direct conversation with Habermas, a slew of historians, sociologists, political scientists, and literary scholars questioned his account of the rise of the bourgeois public sphere in Europe or investigated variations on it elsewhere in the world (e.g., Landes 1988; Calhoun 1993; Ryan 1997; Schudson 1999; Melton 2001; Warner 1990, 2002; SSRC Public Sphere guide). In line with this interdisciplinary revival of interest in notions of the public and public address—and by extension and association, rhetoric—European and American scholars published new comprehensive and critical-revisionist histories of the longer rhetorical tradition during the 1980s and ’90s (Grassi 1980; Kennedy 1988; Barrili 1983; Conley 1994; Lunsford 1995; Glenn, 1997; Wertheimer 1997; Vickers 1998; see also Gaillet and Horner 2010). In the United States, rhetoric remained a home for a wider range of historical research, ranging from neo-traditionalist public address studies (see Medhurst 1993, 2001) to recoveries of women’s and African American voices from the past (e.g., Campbell 1989; Leeman 1996), considerations of oratory across different media environments (Jamieson 1988), and studies of broader public discourses over time (e.g., Condit and Lucitas 1993). The so-called rhetoric of inquiry movement helped to anchor the collective project of left political economic history in an edited volume that extended the tradition of Solomon and McChesney’s Ruthless Criticism.

Social, cultural, and institutional history all found their place in the histories of radio and television that proliferated in the 1990s, helping those fields to establish solid historical literatures. Susan Douglas (1989) and Susan Smulyan (1992) looked at the early years of American radio broadcasting, Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991) did the same for Great Britain, while Mary Vipond (1992) and James Hall (1997) followed suit for Canada. Attention also turned to historical examination of Latin American radio (Fox 1997; Schworz 1998; Hayes 2000; Sinclair, chapter 24, this volume). Other work would follow, leading to a flowering of radio studies over the last two decades (e.g., Hilmes 1997; Savage 1999; Hilmes and Loviglio 2001; for more, see Sterling, chapter 12, this volume). Historical studies of television similarly flowered (e.g., Bourdon 1990; Spigel 1992; Steinmaurer 1999; see Fickers, chapter 13, this volume). Cultural histories of media and collective memory also proliferated in the 1990s (see, e.g., Zelizer 1992, 1998; Lipsitz 1990).

Communication remained a relatively marginal topic within the discipline of history proper, but interest and publications grew in the 1990s and 2000s. A number of studies were organized around information, knowledge, and their flows over time and geographical space. Richard D. Brown (1989, 1996) examined eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, while Daniel Headrick (2000) did analogous work for Europe. More recently, Ian McNeely and Lisa Wolverton (2008) have pushed outward in comparative, cross-national directions over the long duration, chronicling the Western quest for knowledge from Alexandria to the Internet age through the institutions of library, monastery, university, Republic of Letters, disciplines, and laboratory. Cambridge-trained University of Chicago historian Adrian Johns published a number of important books and articles on the history of knowledge, intellectual property, and information across print and electronic media (e.g., 1998, 2009, 2010, 2011). British historian Andrew Pettigrew among others continued to deepen our knowledge of communication in the early modern period with critically acclaimed studies of persuasion in the Reformation and the book in the Renaissance (2005, 2010). Print culture in America was documented thoroughly in the five-volume History of the Book in America (Hall, 2007–2010).

Historicist Turns in Communication Theory and Disciplinary Awareness, 1970s–90s

Communication theory also took historicist turns from the 1970s forward, reflecting new attention to intellectual history as a method and orientation toward theory. This was represented in one way by Carey’s influential work (much of it collected in 1988, 2009, 1997), in another by...

Dating back to the paradigm shifts of the 1970s, the growth in communication history energetically played itself out through histories of the various fields of communication study. The late 1970s saw the first serious work on the intellectual and institutional history of communication and media research (e.g., Gitlin 1978; Morrison 1978; Critcom 1983). It overlapped with a larger family of writings that charted genealogies and historically dominant ideas as part of critiques that advanced alternate paradigms and theoretical problematics (e.g., Chafe 1975; Carey 1977; Gitlin 1979; Hall 1982; a project continued in Peck 2001). The history of communication and media studies was born, accompanied by growing and variably reliable collective memories of the field's past. Since then, in a literature charted by Jeff Pooley and Dave Park (chapter 3, this volume), the history of the field of communication has grown into a robust subfield. Again, the 1990s were a pivotal decade, with critical history well represented in a trio of book-length studies (Hardt 1992; Simpson 1994; Schiller 1996) and William Baxton's pioneering excavations of the institutional support for communication research (1994a, 1994b; see also 2009). Graeme Turner (1990) did some work in his introduction to British Cultural Studies, while Nancy Signorielli (1996) biographically charted the lives of famous and forgotten women in the field (a project taken up a decade later in Naomi McCormack's (2009) documentary film and a supporting website for it). Much of this work focused on the American case, but the history of the field around the world would also begin to be written.

Finally, the term "communication history" itself haltingly began to enter the academic lexicon in the 1980s and '90s, in a period where publication outlets for historical work in communication history, such as Steven and Hazel Dicken-García's *Communication Studies Review* (1988) — perhaps the first book to use the phrase in its title, indexing a project that reached out from journalism history toward media history and historical media effects studies. Another pair of journalism historians also used the term in an early methods textbook for the field (Star and Sloan 1989, now in its 3rd edition). Historians Elizabeth Eisenstein (1979) and Robert Darnton (1982, 65) both used the term in passing in describing their respective projects, though it hasn’t been picked up widely among professional historians. "Media history" was a term that gained popularity in the 1980s, appearing with greater frequency than "communication history," but Solomon and McChesney (1993) selected the latter for the subtitle of their collection, *Routless Criticism*. The term saw an uptake after 2000, with a programmatic call for its internationalization (Dicken-García and Vissanath 2002) and thoughtful reflection on its future (Nerone 2006). Running parallel to the terminological story, new journals and book series were founded to support historical research on communication—from the British journals *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* (established in 1981 by the International Association for Media and History), and *Media History* (1995), and the French *Le temps des médias* (2003) to the History of Communication book series at the University of Illinois Press (1994), Cambridge's Studies in the History of Mass Communication (1996), and MIT's Media in Transition series (2003). In Spain, La Asociación de Historiadores de la Comunicación had been established (1992). By the turn of the last century, communication history showed signs of beginning to institutionalize itself across several of its subfields.

**RECENT TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR COMMUNICATION HISTORY**

Over the last decade, communication history has begun to "come to awareness of itself" as a field, as John Nerone put the matter, remarking at the time on the tentativeness of that situation (2006, 260). Its self-awareness is somewhat less tentative today, owing to new pathways of institutionalization and the publication of several volumes aiming to provide platforms for further study (this Handbook among them). Beginning in 2007, the International Communication Association (ICA) and the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA) formed history groups, joining the history section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (est. 1959), and the International Association for Media and History, formed in the 1980s. Through conferences, panels, and listerves, they have helped organize conversations about the history of media and communication practices, the history of ideas of communication, and the history of the field, all in increasingly international and sometimes comparative manners. That organizational work has been complemented by several publications on communication and media history (Katz et al. 2003; Gitelman and Pingree 2003; Robinson 2004; Peters and Simonson 2004; Chun and Keenan 2006; Zeltzer 2008; Park and Pooley, 2008; Bailey 2008; Peck and Stole 2011; Nerone 2013). Some in media history avoid operating with the idea of "communication" (e.g., Gitelman and Pingree, 2003), but others are more ecumenical. The history of rhetoric, meanwhile, remains intellectually and institutionally more separate, though this collection tries to bring it into the fold as well.

One could provide a sociological account of the field's coming to awareness of itself. Many of the cadre of scholars who came of age in the 1970s and '80s and fueled the early ferment of communication history would land jobs in influential graduate programs, where they trained students who went on to publish some of the most important historical work of the last two decades and who have in turn begun to train their own students. The younger scholars have entered job markets where communication programs show divergent interest in hiring scholars who do historical work, but the prospects are certainly better than they were a generation ago, aided by the growth of publication outlets for historical research.

One way to want to draw attention to six variably established styles or problematics of contemporary communication history that extend lines of analysis begun in the 1970s and that we believe should be cultivated further. They certainly do not represent all the qualities of the current moment worthy of collective attention, but they do capture several of its important strands. There is overlap among them, but each can stand independently. As shorthand, we call them: materiality, depth, internationalization, social identities, digitalization, and reflexive historicizing.

Materiality can, of course, mean different things. On the one hand, there is the Marxian linkage of the material with the economic and productive spheres, as well as its revisionist characterization of discourse, too, as material. Materiality in this sense has been one problematic for communication history throughout the traditions of political economy and critical theory, both of which remain extremely vital and represented across several chapters of this Handbook. But we also draw attention to other materialities that have attracted more recent attention: one clustering around bodies and their material senses, perceptions, and physical arrangement in the world; another attending to the physicality of technological artifacts, built environments, and geographical places. Both the bodies and objects and places clusters have disparate orientations and exemplars,
but they point toward a family of ways to attend to not just the symbolic, ideational, representational, and discursive elements of communication but also to its material manifestations and pathways of effectiveness. Historians of the book have long emphasized the materiality of their artifacts (Nerone 2006), an impulse also seen in cultural histories of radio, television, or newspapers that draw attention to their status as, for instance, furniture organizing domestic space (e.g., Spigel 1992), sources of sound waves or optics (e.g., Douglas 1999; Kittle [1999] 2010), or even insulation for house walls (Leonard 1995). Kittle and his students have advanced one kind of materialist analysis, with Cornelia Visserman ([2000] 2008) for instance writing a genealogy of files and Kittle himself turning toward a kind of mathematical-materialist synthesis before his death (e.g., 2009). Foucault and Kittle have also influenced the turns toward materiality in the project of media archaeology, which attends to both discursive and material manifestations of media in history (Huhtamo and Parikka 2011). Jonathan Sterne (2003), meanwhile, took Foucauldian analytics into the cultural history of sound reproduction, attending to machines and bodies along with techniques, discourses, and conditions of possibility. His was part of a larger flourishing of historical studies of sound and other senses as material and cultural media of communication (see e.g., Thompson 2002; Hilmes 2005; Smith 2008; Goodale 2011). Still others mapped historical spaces and places from communication and media perspectives, attending for instance to places of political assembly and ritual (e.g., Brewin 2008), to broadcasting buildings (Erischen and Riegert 2010), or to contexts for the invention of ideas about communication (Simondon 2010). Historical studies of sound and communication grew rapidly (see Griffin, chapter 7, this volume), many of them also attending to material dimensions of the image.

A second trend worth commenting upon, and one evident in many of the new materialist histories, is what we would call the increasing depth of communication history as a field, series of practices, and assemblage of published studies. The borders of the field are porous and likely to remain so, but in the twenty years since Michael Schudson lamented its woeful underdevelopment, communication history has made considerable progress in establishing itself as a methodologically and theoretically informed area of study with a solid base of literature. As practiced in communication and media studies proper, by scholars of historical communication, communication history still rarely meets the standards of professional historians. Nerone (2006, 2012) and others have written about this asymmetry, and it’s not likely to go away. This doesn’t mean that communication history is second-rate history (though sometimes it is), but rather that it is a field more akin to social historical, historical anthropology, or historical literary studies—all of which, like communication history, tend to bring problematic and theoretical concepts from elsewhere to engage the past (Nerone 2013). Moreover, the best work in communication history over the last several decades, in addition to being driven by critical imagination and analytic rigor, has been built on archival research, textual analysis, interviews, and related interpretive methods applied with the rigor necessary to produce books that have commanded interdisciplinary attention. Collectively, we need to continue to produce books that address audiences both within and outside the field, as well as students capable of producing such work.

The third trend we mention, still not firmly established, is the internationalization of communication history. On the one hand, there is long precedent for thinking about the history of communication in cross-cultural, cross-national, and global perspectives. This was an impulse in the speculative histories of the eighteenth century, a component of the metanarratives of culture and civilization that found their way into anthropological and political economic thinking of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (and their confluence in the Canadian tradition from Innis forward), a periodic element of European journalism histories since the 1930s, a historical correla-

the cosmopolitan and cross-national strands of communication history have generally been overshadowed by nationally or locally focused research, and empirically careful cross-national or comparative work has been far rarer. Over the last decade, though, there have been increasing calls for internationalization from within the disciplinary ranks of communication and media studies (e.g., Dicken-Garcia and Viswanath 2002; Curran 2008; McLight, Kinnebrew, and Schwarzenegger 2011), and a number of scholars have produced—for instance Norbert Finzsch and Ursula Leküngholth’s (2004) edited collection on German and American media since the seventeenth century; Ass Briggs and Peter Burke’s (2005) excellent overview of the social history of media; careful studies of globalization, media, and empire by Jill Hills (2002, 2007) and Dwayne Winseck and Robert Pike (2007); several volumes and essays internationalizing the history of the field (e.g., Park and Pooley 2008; Simonson and Peters 2008; Fleck 2011); and Michelle Hilmes’s (2011) transnational study of broadcasting in the United States and Britain (see also Putnis, Kaul and Wilke 2011). We need more work in these veins—mapping cross-flows of influence and historical development, comparing formations and practices across regions, and continuing to fill out the communication history of globalization in all its complexities.

A fourth trend, originating in the social and cultural histories of the 1970s and ’80s, organizes itself around attention to gender, race, class, and other social identities as central categories for communication history. Gender is the best established in historical literature (see Ross, chapter 20, this volume), with more than three decades of writing on women and media recently joined by newer studies of masculinity. Labor and the working classes continue to receive attention in communication history (see Godfried, chapter 18, this volume; also Ross 1999; Roscigno and Danaher 2004; Jones 2006), though not to the extent they deserve, in part a reflection on the priorities of cultural as opposed to social history. While sexual identity and GLBTQ issues have found a growing space in studies of contemporary communication, historical work in the field lags, though it too has seen a number of important books in the last decade or so (e.g., Alwood 1996; Gross and Woods 1999; Gross 2002; Morris 2007; Streimokr 2008; Sutton 2010). Native and indigenous peoples have been the focus of several studies (e.g., Keith 1995; Coward 1999; Daley and James 2004; see also Romano, and McCracken and Terfornaselli, chapter 23). Native and indigenous descent, they have largely fallen outside the purview of communication history to date—a marginalization in the contemporary literature that mirrors the treatment non-Europeans received in the evolutionary metamorphoses of media from the eighteenth century forward. Religious identities, on the other hand, have garnered far more attention in historical studies of mediated and face-to-face communication, and there are now relatively large bodies of work on the communications media of Christianity and Judaism, as well as growing research on Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism (see Swearingen, Kouts, and Echchaibi, chapter 24, this volume), but like other examples of non-European descents, they have largely fallen outside the purview of communication history to date—a marginalization in the contemporary literature that mirrors the treatment non-Europeans received in the evolutionary metamorphoses of media from the eighteenth century forward. Ritualistic identities, however, have garnered far more attention in historical studies of mediated and face-to-face communication, and there are now relatively large bodies of work on the communications media of Christianity and Judaism, as well as growing research on Islam, Buddhism, and Confucianism (see Swearingen, Kouts, and Echchaibi, chapter 24, this volume). In addition, the digital has become a topic for communication history ranging from the medieval scholar James Joseph O’Donnell’s (1998) comparative meditation on reading in the ancient and Internet eras to Fred Turner’s (2006) meticulously detailed social and cultural history of the rise of California cyberculture, among other ways to chart the history and meaning of the latest new medium (see Peters and Nielsen, chapter 14, this volume). Finally, the digital moment
has helped to drive interest in other topics, as for instance the archive, which since the mid-1990s has become a fashionable consideration for both poststructuralist theorists (e.g., Derrida 1995) and technologically attuned historians (e.g., Rosenzweig 2011). Digital media raise the possibility of preserving “an essentially complete historical record” (Rosenzweig 2011, 5), including the preservation of visual, audio, and written media texts— ushering in an era of new plentitude of primary sources for certain types of communication history (Fickers, chapter 13, this volume). European and American communication historians and theorists have taken up the topic as well, drawing attention to important questions about methods, artifacts, and conceptual understandings of history in the digital age (see e.g., Robertson 2010; Fickers and de Leeuw 2012).

Finally, in the spirit of exhortation as much as observation of obvious trends, we conclude with a call for more historicization across communication studies writ large, from its humanistic to its scientific wings. Here we shift registers from communication history to historically-informed (or perhaps historically-aware) communication studies and communication science. This reflexive historicism can take multiple forms, including: (1) historicizing the phenomena we study by recognizing that they express themselves in particular times and places, even when we aim for universality in our findings or broad representativeness in our samples; (2) historicizing theories and operative concepts by knowing something of their emergence and genealogies; (3) historicizing research projects through reference to relevant predecessors that serve not just as abstract references in a literature review but also material endeavors carried out within institutional structures and embodied figures; (4) historicizing our broader fields of study by seeing how they are the products of societal and academic problematics that change over time and are likely to seem dated and perhaps flawed within a couple of decades. Communication historians as a group can contribute to this struggle for greater historical awareness by collaborating with colleagues who work in traditionally non-historical subfields, making local arguments for historical historicizing research projects through reference to relevant predecessors that serve not just as abstract references in a literature review but also material endeavors carried out within institutional structures and embodied figures; (4) historicizing our broader fields of study by seeing how they are the products of societal and academic problematics that change over time and are likely to seem dated and perhaps flawed within a couple of decades. Communication historians as a group can contribute to this struggle for greater historical awareness by collaborating with colleagues who work in traditionally non-historical subfields, making local arguments for historical education in graduate and undergraduate programs, and finding new ways to connect the history of communication with the present and near future.

To bring this long chapter to a merciful close, we end by reflecting back across the terrain we have made an effort to begin mapping. The first point to re-emphasize is that, despite its length, our chapter is only provisional, a prolegomena to future work, and a radically incomplete mapping of communication history in world perspective. Part of our work has been conceptual, casting communication history as a family of more- and less-conceptualized practices, organized around the explicit terms and ideas of rhetoric, communication, journalism/news, media, and to a lesser extent information. Those explicit traditions and discourses each trail international around the explicit terms and ideas of rhetoric, communication, journalism/news, media, and to a lesser extent information. Those explicit traditions and discourses each trail international movements with the present and near future.

NOTE

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