



Abstract of Lecture

Title: The Greatest Change in the History of Media

Within the span of a human's lifetime, people's access to news, entertainment, and information has changed from relative scarcity to surplus, surfeit, or overload. Less than 30 years ago, many people had access to, at most, one or two daily newspapers, one or two television channels, a half dozen radio stations, and perhaps a dozen magazines, but most of the world's population had access to even fewer. However, nearly two billion persons today have access to dozens of newspapers, scores or hundreds of magazines and television and radio channels, and one quarter billion Web sites and blogs. As mobile phones and other portable devices begin to replace personal computers as the predominant way in which people access electronic information, video, and audio during this coming decade, more than 4 billion people will have in the palms of their hands instant access to all the world's information. This is the greatest change in the history of media. If historians say that the invention of the printing press—which provided information to only a few million people within its first 30 years—catalyzed the Renaissance and the great Age of Exploration, what will two-thirds of the world's population having instant access to all the world's information now spark? How is this changing societies, politics, cultures, and media?