



SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS
FOUNDATION

OPENING ADDRESS BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, CHAIRMAN OF SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS FOUNDATION, AT THE MEDIA IN TRANSITION: SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT LECTURE SERIES INAUGURAL LECTURE BY PROFESSOR HENRY JENKINS AT THE DRAMA CENTRE ON FRIDAY, 5 JANUARY 2007, AT 5.30PM

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan
Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports &
Second Minister for Information, Communication and the Arts

Dr Balaji Sadasivan
Senior Minister of State
Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts &
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Professor Henry Jenkins
DeFlorz Professor of Humanities and
Founder and Director, Comparative Media Studies Program
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Singapore Press Holdings Foundation, I would like to thank all of you for joining us at this inaugural event to launch the lecture series on the theme "Media in Transition: Social and Economic Impact".

Gutenberg's invention of the movable-type printing press in the mid-15th century led to a revolution in the production of books and facilitated a quicker transmission of information and knowledge. The print revolution transformed European society as it brought about a transition from medieval to modern times. The Renaissance period that followed saw a great revival of art, literature and learning, and rapid advancement in fields such as the sciences, arts and religion.

The religious and aristocratic elites in those days first tried to stop, then sought to control, before finally deciding to co-opt the new print medium. In the centuries that followed, social and legal systems adjusted, with copyright laws coming into existence, for example, and books, newspapers and magazines began to circulate widely. The age of mass media had arrived. Two more technological breakthroughs - radio and television - brought mass media to a peak in the late 1950s.

Today, media and its platforms of delivery are undergoing a second period of rapid and phenomenal transformation brought about by a revolution of a different kind. The digital revolution started by the proliferation of the personal computer and other information technology devices and applications has given rise to a dramatically different media landscape.

Traditional media (newspapers, books, magazine, television, radio) now has to contend with new media. In effect, we are increasingly and progressively witnessing the media in transition. The Internet and the World Wide Web have transformed media consumption habits and the way people communicate, form opinions and live, work and play.

From almost anywhere in the world, people can now go online to keep up with news from their hometown newspaper or TV station, and stay connected with colleagues, friends and family. The Web has altered the pace of change and the face of popular culture. It has virtualised physical distances, rendered information instantly and readily accessible and revolutionised communication.

Interestingly, in 2001, some five-and-a-half centuries after Gutenberg's invention of the first printing press with replaceable or movable letter blocks, "Movable Type" was invented again. Mena Trott, having been laid off during the dotcom bust and with ample spare time, started posting her thoughts on her online journal, "Dollarshort", which became very popular. So together with her also laid-off husband Benjamin, the Trotts decided to build a better journalistic tool, which they chose to call 'Movable Type', likening it to Gutenberg's printing press because it was clearly revolutionary. "Movable Type" is now the blogging software of choice for

many business and professional bloggers, including many in the audience this evening.

Blogging, together with other web technologies such as podcasting and vodcasting, have become tools for anyone to create their own content on the Internet, giving rise to a new media culture. People no longer passively consume content but actively participate in the production of content.

A recent study commissioned by the Media Development Authority of Singapore revealed that 33 per cent of Singaporeans between the ages of 15 and 49 are moderately involved in producing and publishing online content such as blogs, Webcasts or podcasts. These content producers make up almost half of Singapore's active Internet user population, with the figure expected to grow further.

This transformation of media holds profound implications socially and economically, and countries all over the world are grappling to understand the impact on their societies and economies. Should we, like the religious and aristocratic elites of the Middle Ages try to stop, control and only eventually co-opt the new media or should we fully embrace this age of personal and participatory media? How do we harness the positives of new media without imbibing the negatives and avoiding the pitfalls? There are many questions but few definitive answers because the pace of change in media today is swift. It is for this reason that the Singapore Press Holdings Foundation deems it timely and apt to kick off a lecture series focused on the media in transition and to examine its social and economic impact, for which we are here this evening.

As a charity and an Institution of Public character, one of the SPH Foundation's objectives is the promotion of lifelong learning in Singapore. The SPH Foundation supports various causes such as education, arts and culture, sports, conservation, community service and charity.

For today's inaugural lecture, the Foundation is honoured to have with us Professor Henry Jenkins from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. As the DeFlorz Professor of Humanities and Founder and Co-Director of MIT's Comparative

Media Studies Program and the author or editor of twelve books on various aspects of media and popular culture, Professor Jenkins is well qualified to shed light on the topic.

Professor Jenkins' latest book "Convergence Culture" is now already in its third print. He also writes a daily blog that has become a reference for media specialists as well as a monthly column for "Computer Games Magazine".

I am sure that Professor Jenkins' extensive experience and knowledge coupled with his current research interests on digital aesthetics, media convergence, transmedia storytelling, computer games, and youth culture will make his lecture titled "From YouTube to YouNiversity: Learning and Playing in the Era of Social Networks" fascinating and enlightening.

I now have great pleasure to invite Professor Jenkins to deliver his lecture.

Thank you.