

Rhetoric and the WWW: Why Study the Media:  
Roger Silverstone  
Chapter 3: Technology



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# Context



- Professor of Media and Communication at the London School of Economics
- Published his thesis in 1981 called “The Message of Television”, analyzing television's influence
- Wrote 12 books including Framing Science and Television and Everyday Life
- Very knowledgeable on technologies influence on media
- Died in July 2006

# Silverstone and Technology



# Summary of Silverstone

- Silverstone argues that technology offers opportunities while having limitations
- The author mentions through the chapter that technology is streamed through everything we do, including, economics, politics, culture and plays a part of how we work, play, and participate in society

At the same time while technology, he points out  
does effect society in general it is also the  
social, economic factors that also effect  
technology

Old media is new media

# Key Points

“New technologies, new media, increasingly converging through the mechanism of digitization, are transforming social and cultural time and space” (Silverstone, P 19, 1999)

“For technology is not to be understood as machine. It includes the skills and competencies, the knowledge and the desire, without which it cannot work” (Silverstone, P 21, 1999)

# Examples

One example of where how technology has effected how we play and participate in society instantaneously is through the instant access to videos on YouTube or [blogs](#)

The cell phone and leapfrogging technology can be another example of how technology has effect society.



*Photo from [www.cbc.ca/doczone/cellphones](http://www.cbc.ca/doczone/cellphones)*

On the other side....

Society has affected technology by allowing people to mass collaborate and customize something to their own desires. Example, Wikipedia, Playstaton Home, iphone apps



Silverstone also notes the importance of technology as culture, economics, and politics with how both society and technology interact with each other



- “It has to come to terms with an economic space which is defined by a rapidly expanding and still relatively open information environment commerce, electronic commerce takes place” (Silverstone P 24, 1999)
- “The politics that emerges or can be argued for around the media is a politics of access and regulation, and the politics that may or may not be enabled within the media is a politics of participation and representation in both senses of the word, in which new forms of democracy might emerge; or indeed, new forms of tyranny. (Silverstone, P 26, 1999)



- “And it is in this context too, that we can begin to enquire into the wider cultural spaces in which technologies operate, and which give them both their meaning and their power”  
(Silverstone, P 22, 1999)

Silverstone also mentions that Old media is new.

“New Media are constructed on the foundations of the Old” (Silverstone, P 20, 1999)

The World Wide web the convergence of print, television, and radio?

# Silverstone, Technology and its relationship with other readings

# Marshall McLuhan

- Makes reference to McLuhan's idea of Technology as physique, meaning technology is an extension of us as humans
- “Our media especially, have extended range and reach, granting us infinite power but also changing the environment in which that power is exercised” (Silverstone P 20, 1999)
- Also Supports McLuhan ideas of medium is the message and Global Village, as per relating Technology as culture, economics and politics while supporting the ideas that Technology has effected society and vice versa
- “The new electronic interdependence recreates the world in the image of a global village” (McLuhan, 1962)

# Henry Jenkins

Relates to Jenkins, Counter Culture, Chapter 4 *Quentin Tarantino's Star Wars*, in how technology has shaped society and vice versa with regards leapfrogging communication technologies, lower costs, mass collaboration (fan made Star Wars films) and technology as culture and economics

“What gives me some hope, however, is the collaborationist approach is beginning to gain some toehold within some industries” (Jenkins, P 173, 2008)

# Stuart Hall

Stuart Hall, in his theory mentions the importance of encoding and decoding with his three views on readings, Dominant-hegemonic (out right win) position, Negotiated position, and Oppositional position.

Silverstone's view of technology would relate to all three, but would be specifically geared towards a negotiated position as Silverstone argues that technology does not make us, but rather society influences technology.

# Adorno and Horkheimer

Adorno and Horkheimer would argue that society would not influence technology, but technology would dominate society, and not be domesticated (no vice versa relationship)

Adorno and Horkheimer would say that technology creates a vacuum of mass culture, homogenizing culture, while distracting people from political action

# Technology, WWW & Persuasion

Silverstone talks about how technology is a channel of persuasion in terms of getting a message across through this medium of exchange

The WWW is an extension of technology that allows people instant access to information

# Technology, WWW & Persuasion

- Old media is the foundations of new
- WWW could be summed as tv, print and audio wrapped into a digitized format (Old media companies have web sites)
- WWW offers new public spheres in engagement of rhetoric, in terms of “The Internet as politics” (example You Tube, Facebook, Twitter)
- WWW defy what Marxist communications theory would say in terms of political engagement



*Photo Source: <http://divyun.com>*

# Mining the Text

“It makes us question. But it misses the nuances of agency and meaning, of the human exercise of power and of our resistance. It misses too, other sources of change: factors that affect the creation of technologies themselves and factors that mediate our responses to them.”  
(Silverstone P. 21, 1999)

# Question of the Day

Are we as a society, today through media better off through technological advances in terms of culture, economics and political awareness, or worse off?

How has Technology effected how you consume media?

# Photo Sources Not listed in Slides

1. Television Photo: <http://www.slipperybrick.com/2007/10/lg-reveals-32-inch-plasma-television/>
2. Roger Silverstone Photo: <http://www.infoamerica.org/teoria/silverstone1.htm>
3. Playstation 3 Photo: <http://www.ps3-for-free.com/>
4. Laptop Photo: <http://blog.loaz.com/timwang/laptop-notebook.php>
5. BlackBerry Photo: <http://www.comparatio.com/products/mcm/index.html>
6. Iphone App: <http://www.techdigest.tv/iphone%20and%20apps%20thumb.jpg>
7. Global Economics Photo: <http://cloverauctions.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/global-economy.jpg>
8. Killzone Playstation magazine cover:  
[http://www.nyc2123.com/blog/uploaded\\_images/cover-763681.gif](http://www.nyc2123.com/blog/uploaded_images/cover-763681.gif)