Principles of Professional Communication 1

Mediated Communication
– it’s communication Jim, but not as we know it!
The Evolution of “Technology”

- Technology can be considered any thing that has been developed to alter or improve the ways humans do things eg a pen, a knife & fork, wheel, written text

- Technologies develop in response to particular needs and are driven by social, political, cultural and economic and historical contexts & circumstances
Evolution of communication technologies

Three, maybe four times in recent history, a new technology has been introduced that has fundamentally transformed human society by changing the way people communicate with each other...

...Campbell, 1998
History of communication technologies

1844 Morse code
   - “What hath God wrought?”  Samuel Morse

1876 Telephone
   - “Mr Watson, come here, I want you.”  Alexander Graham Bell

1895 Marconigram
   - “We speak across time and space ... May the new power promote peace between all nations.”  
     Sir Edgar Walton to General J.B.M. Hertzog in 1924
History of communication technologies

- **1968 ARPANET**
  - *One of the advantages of the message systems over letter mail was that, in an ARPANET message, one could write tersely and type imperfectly, even to an older person in a superior position and even to a person one did not know very well, and the recipient took no offense.*” J.C.R. Licklider & Albert Vezza

- **1971 Email**
  - “qwertyiop” Ray Tomlinson to himself

- **Marshall McLuhan ‘the medium is the message’?”**
Dimensions of Mediated Communication

- **TASK** performed – what are we using it for?
  - An enhancement of traditional forms or a way of avoiding them? Cyberloafing
  - An immediate way to disperse information eg journalists/bloggers

- **SOCIAL** function – allows you to establish social relationships eg Facebook, blogs, Twitter
  - What impact does the lack of interpersonal, face to face communication have on organisational effectiveness?
  - How many real ‘friends’?
Types of mediated communication

- **Interactive** mediums – such as email, text messaging, chat, and forums;
- **Non-interactive** mediums – such as blogs, podcasts, and YouTube;
- **Social** mediums – such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter;
- **Videoconferencing** mediums – such as Skype, and gmail videoconferencing.
Social Presence Theory

- Developed by Short, Williams and Christie in 1976
- A medium’s social effects are principally caused by the degree of 'social presence' which it affords to its users – impact of non verbal cues
- ‘Deindividuation’: the extent to which we lose awareness of self and of that of others as ‘real people’ due to absence of social cues
- Potential problems of net anonymity for cyberbullying, diminishing empathy, workplace relationships: the ‘human moment’
The ‘New Age’ reader
from “What if readers can’t read?” by Tony Self Intercom Feb 2009

A self-survey of digital ethnography students at Kansas State University found that the average student, in one year:

- Bought text books worth $100, but never opened them
- Read 8 paper books
- Read 2,300 Web pages
- Viewed 1,281 Facebook profiles
- Wrote 42 pages of assignments
- Wrote 500 pages of emails

According a study by Cetron in 1998, children encounter as much information in a single year as their grandparents did in a lifetime.
Reading online is different ...

- Research shows that we read differently on a screen than we read from a traditional text.
- Computer screens are equated with TV and people are looking to be entertained → impact on how information is structured online:
  - non linear structure – searchable
  - short bites of information in visual units
  - concise & simple language, short sentences
  - hyperlinks – interactivity – visuals
- Future of electronic books?
Is Google making us stupid? The perils of mediated communication

- A range of diverse views from research
- ‘Information obesity’ → ‘linguistic impoverishment’?
- We resist anything that requires longer concentration?
- Losing ability for deep thinking?
- Value of knowledge diminished due to its availability?
- Delegation of our memory to electronic devices?
  No longer need to remember phone numbers or add up a restaurant bill. Problem of relying on digital storage?
- Impact on our lives of constant connection? Stress, ADD?
Is email different to snail mail?

- Who owns your email? Public or private property?
- As a mass medium, you need to consider who may read/see it to avoid any potential embarrassment and/or libel.
- Potential for mass dissemination of information beyond original intention of the writer.
- As a written medium, the writer is still accountable.
- However, today’s generations see email as legitimate.
- Authority of info is more likely to be conveyed by its currency (how up-to-date) than by its providence (who wrote it) or packaging (what form it is written in).
IT WAS a cheerful, upbeat exchange of emails between good friends. The sender, a loyal Anglican, used tinges of blue humour - as well as several light-hearted biblical references - to question women's subordination and why male but not female lay members of her eastern suburbs congregation were allowed to preach. "Whose penis must I hold to do a real sermon in the morning like [name deleted]?!" the email concluded.

For the writer, Dr Belinda Goodenough, a psychologist and renowned expert in pediatric pain management, the email on January 10 last year represented just another electronic chapter in years of collegiate, friendly banter. But the recipient, Steve Bainbridge, rector of St Paul's Anglican church in South Coogee, responded that it was "totally inappropriate". Despite her immediate email apology - "I am so sorry / I let my sense of humour get away with me" - the rector not only brought the friendship to an abrupt end but Dr Goodenough was stripped of all her lay ministry roles ... SMH story 25/3/06
Research Dr Monica Whitty (UWS 2003) found that:

- Most believed “hot chat” online was a form of infidelity
- One in ten Australians went beyond online flirting and sexual chat to no holds barred sexual encounters on the net
- Women are less likely to differentiate between online and offline infidelity
Social media

According to research by Dr Virginia Nightingale (UWS)

- SMS more ‘here and now’ than the net for young people
- Writing a message means disclosing more feelings and creating deeper relationships
- Allows young people to enlarge their social circles and feel connected by being included
- A survival technique when things go wrong
- Gives teenagers a sense of independence
- Is ‘connectivity poverty’? Twitter, Facebook
“Unchecked, my social media use metastasised into too many messages needing replies, friends wanting validation, perspective stretched too thin and endless outrages and intrigues. I’d bump into acquaintances who’d repeat my past six months of Facebook updates, even though they had never replied or said anything online; like they’d spent six months passively watching a barking seal at the aquarium.” Amy Gray

- Will Power “Hamlet’s Blackberry”
- Sherry Turkle “Alone Together”
Y SMS can cause u gr8 pain

- Can be a source of social ostracism if you are left out of the SMS loop
- Can be a source of SMS stalking
  – Shane Warne
- Mobile ******* or “‘having a ‘textie’” is not necessarily private – David Beckham
- Unerased messages can come back to haunt you
  – Tiger Woods
- ‘Sexting’ is illegal
The good, the bad and the ugly

- “There is no such thing as privacy” … Mark Zuckerberg. Digital eavesdropping, CCTV, News Ltd phone hacking scandal
- Social media good for democracy? Arab Spring vs London Riots
- Copyright and plagiarism
- Censorship?
- An outlet for ‘hate speech’? Need for censorship? The Bolt case
- Opportunity for ‘trolling’. Charlotte Dawson case
Therefore, how is mediated communication different?

- A relatively new medium of communication which has been pushed as much by social factors as technological ones.
- Allows people to ‘leap the gatekeeper’ of traditional media eg Twitter campaigns.
- Not merely another medium of transmission but a medium with its own rules/norms, ways of reading and expectations.
- Various dimensions of electronic message use need to be taken into account. Is it a substitute for writing or speaking?
Mate. We don't talk like we used to in the old days. What's happened? Something's changed. There's no natural conversation any more, no laughs, no devil, no soul, no real connection. It's cactus mate! Why?
Conclusion

The consequences of mediated communication lie solely in the hands of the user.

- Respect Others
- Conserve bandwidth – if you have nothing to say, don’t waste virtual space
- Imagine how others might interpret my posts
- Lead by positive example
- Be clear-headed – don’t send messages when you are angry or tired
- All messages are public property

Tom Van Vleck