

Then: Print Technology

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WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will focus on print technology. While writing, in general, gave our words and our ideas durability and allowed us to spread our words to others, print technology enabled us to spread our words far more quickly to others. Before print technology, it usually took a team of people a significant amount of time working by hand to copy our important texts. Print technology meant fewer people could copy text far more quickly and precisely. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Print Technology



BEFORE YOU START

How did the invention of the printing press and newspapers change the way we communicate?

1. Print Technology

Much like the alphabet, the printing press was a major technological innovation that spread writing around the world. Prior to its invention, every piece of written information had to be meticulously handwritten. This made books and letters extremely rare and available only to a limited number of people—those who had the means to purchase them and the ability to read them.

The printing press was invented in China and Korea somewhere between 1000 and 1300 CE. Around the same time, new types of paper were invented that would evolve into the kind of paper we use today. The printing press developed into even more useful technology with the invention of movable type. In Europe around 1440, Johannes Gutenberg became known as the maker of one of the most important types of printing presses. With movable type and other features, the Gutenberg press made mass production of books possible (Palermo, 2014).

The printing press also made possible a massive information-sharing network as people used single-sheet broadsides, cheap pamphlets, and books to exchange ideas and keep up with current events. Print helped fuel new religious movements and made it easier for 18th-century revolutionaries in the American colonies to spread their ideas. These developments show the power of communication and the kind of changes that can occur when we have the technology to harness it.

The very first American newspapers were written to update people in England about what was happening in the colonies. These papers reported on the health of the colonists and the status of the crops, but they were not typical newspapers as we think of them today. The Boston News-Letter was the first regularly published

American newspaper, publishing its first edition on April 24, 1704 (New England Historical Society, n.d.).

In the first part of the 18th century, newspapers played an important role in the campaign for American independence. And after the Revolutionary War, newspapers continued to serve as an important forum for political ideas and debate. They helped create the United States' political foundations and were often used by politicians campaigning for office. Because shipping newspapers was difficult and literacy was not as widespread as it is today, these newspapers were posted in public places like churches and taverns where they could be read aloud to groups of people.

In the mid-1800s, publishers started printing papers that were very similar to our newspapers today. They lowered the cost and reported on current events with less of a political message. Some of the most famous American newspapers were launched in the 1850s, including the New York Evening Post and the New York Times. From there, the distribution of newspapers and the relevance of their content continued to increase, and by the 20th century, newspapers could be found in almost every home in America (McNamara, 2020).



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned how communication evolved after the invention of **print technology**. Print technology like the printing press and movable type allowed the written word to spread to more people around the world than ever before. Information-sharing initiated broad social changes and contributed to the Revolutionary War between England and its American colonies.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.

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