Mass Communications
Group Project in Media Convergence

As we have discussed in class, the digital world of electronics and the internet are changing the way mass communication is produced, distributed and consumed. This project is designed to have students examine a convergence issue in more depth.

Summary of the Project

- Students will placed into groups
- Groups will develop a topic focus for this project. The idea is to examine one way a traditional mass medium is being changed by our digital world.
- There are three activities a group will engage in during this project.
  o Post weekly to an all-class blog.
  o Develop and design some multimedia product to present their research findings (a web site, short movie, radio show, podcast, Flash presentation, interactive PowerPoint, etc)
  o Presentation of this multimedia product to the class and a short all-group oral presentation on the process of building this project.

Following is a more detailed explanation of different phases of the project.

Finding a Topic

Identify a specific type/industry of mass communication and then narrow your topic to a particular product, service, or phenomenon within this industry. For your topic, each team will do three things: (a) give a report from an industry perspective, (b) assess some of the ramifications for this industry, and (c) speculate about the functions and effects for individuals.

For example, you may be interested in how the printed book industry is changing due to digital distribution. You have many options here in narrowing this topic. You could look at the role and use of computers in the book publishing industry. You could explore the CD-ROM book industry; or you could look at how book selling (retail) is changing due to the increased use of the WWW to sell traditional books. You could look the emerging new type of "book," called digital books (such as the Rocket e-book), along with how books are becoming distributed by WWW publishing sources. Also, you could examine digital distribution of books in and of itself.

As for functions and effects, you might note how widespread retail of books on the WWW is changes how people shop; how this is more convenient but perhaps apt to replace a mode of socializing such as going to the bookstore. (You could speculate that book sellers like Border's have changed their concept of a bookstore to consciously become community gathering places because of the appeal of on-line retail.)
Posting to the Blog

Each week of the project teams will make a post to the blog set up for this course. Each team should designate one person to get all the relevant information from me on how to access the blog and post to it.

For each week teams will find an internet source relevant to their project and post the following:

- A one paragraph (2 to 4 sentence) summary of the resource
- A link to the article
- A one paragraph (2 to 4 sentence) discussion of the relevance of the source to media convergence.

Developing the Multimedia Product

Each team will develop a multimedia product that can be viewed or listened to by the class. The product should be 5 to 10 minutes in length if it is a self-running product like a Flash presentation, PowerPoint presentation, audio program, or video presentation.

Each team could present an interactive screen-based presentation like a web site or interactive PowerPoint presentation.

The Presentation

During the final period, each team will make a presentation (about 20 minutes) to the class on their findings. The presentation will be structured as follows:

- Introduction of the project (about 1-2 minutes)
- Walk through or exhibition of the project (10 minutes about)
- Discussion of the process of building the presentation with emphasis on gate keeping (5 minutes)
- Summary of finding and future of this topic (about 5 minutes)

Everyone on the team needs to participate in the presentation. The presentation needs to be delivered from notes and no reading. Individual grades will be reduced in this case.

Final Grade Calculation

Blogging – 25%
Production – 30%
Presentation – 30%
Individual performance – 15%