



# **The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century**

*Marshall McLuhan*

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

# The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century

*Marshall McLuhan*

**The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century** Marshall McLuhan  
Extending the visionary early work of the late Marshall McLuhan, *The Global Village*, one of his last collaborative efforts, applies that vision to today's worldwide, integrated electronic network. When McLuhan's groundbreaking *Understanding Media* was published in 1964, the media as we know it today did not exist. But McLuhan's argument, that the technological extensions of human consciousness were racing ahead of our ability to understand their consequences, has never been more compelling. And if the medium is the message, as McLuhan maintained, then the message is becoming almost impossible to decipher. In *The Global Village*, McLuhan and co-author Bruce R. Powers propose a detailed conceptual framework in terms of which the technological advances of the past two decades may be understood. At the heart of their theory is the argument that today's users of technology are caught between two very different ways of perceiving the world. On the one hand there is what they refer to as Visual Space--the linear, quantitative mode of perception that is characteristic of the Western world; on the other hand there is Acoustic Space--the holistic, qualitative reasoning of the East. The medium of print, the authors argue, fosters and preserves the perception of Visual Space; but, like television, the technologies of the data base, the communications satellite, and the global media network are pushing their users towards the more dynamic, "many-centered" orientation of Acoustic Space. The authors warn, however, that this movement towards Acoustic Space may not go smoothly. Indeed, McLuhan and Powers argue that with the advent of the global village--the result of worldwide communications--these two worldviews "are slamming into each other at the speed of light," asserting that "the key to peace is to understand both these systems simultaneously." Employing McLuhan's concept of the Tetrad--a device for predicting the changes wrought by new technologie

## **The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century Details**

Date : Published September 17th 1992 by Oxford University Press, USA (first published 1989)

ISBN : 9780195079104

Author : Marshall McLuhan

Format : Paperback 240 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Philosophy, Computers, Internet, Science, Technology

 [Download The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and M ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century Marshall McLuhan**

---

# **From Reader Review The Global Village: Transformations in World Life and Media in the 21st Century for online ebook**

## **Kevin says**

A good read, I was pleasantly surprised to find many intriguing ideas presented in true McLuhan fashion. I found this to be a much more accessible read than Understanding Media with many more clear applications and examples. While many of the concepts may show their age, I was amazed to find that the majority still apply some 20-30 years later now.

---

## **Stephen says**

For me, this was my first encounter with the term “global village,” and in this context it's a world linked through electronic technologies. Call it a shot across the bow. It came in the late 1980s, long before the world wide web. And today, here I sit, in effect, talking to the world through my laptop computer.

As a Thoreauian nature boy, this linkage scared me because of what might be lost in the transition. It brought to mind images of the Borg, the beehive-like aliens on “Star Trek: the Next Generation,” who had lost all sense of being an individual to the “collective.”

McLuhan and Powers write, “As new technological man races toward this totality and inclusiveness, he will no longer, as in earlier times, have an experience of nature, as “nature-in-the-wild.” He will have lost touch, and by now we should realize that touch is not simply skin pressure, but a grasp of all senses at once, a kind of tactility. When we lose nature as a direct experience we lose a balance wheel, the touchstone of natural law.”

“As it did for the nineteenth-century plainmen, going out to be alone raises the ultimate question: who am I? We remove ourselves from the anonymity of the crowd. Standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon or a glacial tundra, we are swept with a sense of immensity, a feeling of awe, which—for most of us—is swiftly followed by a prayer and thanksgiving... Today we reclaim and repossess ourselves in forest and glen and take stock, once again, of our individual worth. We have tried to demonstrate how video-related technologies. Taking advantage of left-hemisphere overload, will implode our inner sensibilities... But more than that, these technologies will invade our inner peace, occupying our every waking moment. We will need a place to hide.”

Yes, I was somewhat scared.

---

## **Benton Turner says**

This is an insanely good book on our relationships with technology, how they reshape our lives.

To me, the importance is this. With more tech development, we have more opportunities to reshape our experience, theoretically, to improve our lives given our conditions. But unless we understand how that

shaping happens, and the degree to which it does, we are not going to be able to see, and at least we'll undervalue, the costs imposed on our lives from interaction with the new tech. And we're going to undervalue benefits that interaction with new tech can have as well.

With tech there are first order benefits, but also second order and third order consequences. Most of us look only at first order benefits. For instance, social media. First order benefit: social stimulation. But there's a cost: streamlined peer comparison. This actually creates the temporary rush, the first order "benefit".

Or look at cars: shorter commutes. When abused, makes cars make commutes MORE challenging through congestion, especially in cities. A reversal happens when we maximally engage with new technology. Entering that reversal is the path of least resistance, when we abuse the short term benefits that seem to be cost-free. That illusion happens we don't have the education that this book provides and encourages.

Another example: porn offers sexuality. But it reduces our sexuality when we abuse it and find ourselves desensitized to both normal porn and normal sex. We need balance, and when there's new technology and we don't understand what it does to us, we don't find that balance. We tend towards maximal use.

This book does well to explain these things. And my book does well in that regard, specifically related to social media, pornography, based on work experience in social media:  
<https://www.breakingthefeedbackloop.com/>.

---

## **Fawls13 says**

Once I actually sat down and read this book it turned out to be one of the best books I have ever read. For me it was a different view of the world, with an excellent foundational layout to give it logic. I read it a while ago and though there are some specifics 'predictions' in it that have not held up the basic theories and reasoning around them remain insightful.

The downside is that it's sort of written like a textbook. A little easier to read, but it's not a novel or story. It also might not be as insightful for people who have grown up in the information age. While it does not deal with technology as such it looks at how different cultural approaches tie into technology and rapid change.

---

## **Debbie Morrison says**

The Global Village, published posthumously is one of Marshall McLuhan's best works (1989). The book, a collaborative effort with McLuhan's long-time friend and colleague Bruce Powers, summarizes McLuhan's lifelong exploration and analysis of media, culture and man's relationship with technology. McLuhan was a media philosopher, author, professor, scholar and is best known for coining the term *the medium is the message*.

McLuhan's books are challenging reads, which is why I persevered and read the entire book--to challenge my comprehension skills for one, but also to gain another perspective on how our culture is assimilating and responding to technology. And though the book was written over twenty years ago, it is just as relevant today as it was in 1989. The book prompts reflection and forward thinking at the same time.

McLuhan and Powers introduce a framework for analyzing media via a tetrad. A tetrad is any set of four things; McLuhan uses the tetrad as a pedagogical tool for examining an artifact or concept (not necessarily a communication medium) through a metaphoric lens, which according to McLuhan translates to "two grounds and two figures in dynamic and analogical relationship to each other". You can see how the idea can stretch one's cognitive processes. The framework began to make sense when reviewing the tetradic glossary at the end of the book which examines twenty or more ideas and artifacts through the tetrad framework, including periodic tables, a clock, cable television, and the telephone.

What would be a most challenging in a media and communications class might be to have students apply the tetrad structure to current technological tools and applications. How might the iPhone be viewed? Or Twitter? Though provoking to say the least.

The more I read of McLuhan's work, and about McLuhan himself, the more I am convinced the man was a genius. He predicts events, media tools and media culture during his lifetime that no one could have imagined or even considered in the 70's and 80's. Yet he could see into the future, see how our society is shaped and influenced by technological forces on media.

McLuhan's website: <http://www.marshallmcluhan.com/>

---

### **Alberto Martinell says**

Manera particular de ver el mundo es la de McLuhan; y aunque BRP ayuda a explicar las ideas de tétrade, cliché, arquetipo, visual, acústico, sincrónico y diacrónico, su pensamiento es complejo y difícil de digerir. Buen libro

---

### **Liliyah says**

ternyata semua perkembangan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi yg terjadi saat ini sudah diramalkan berpuluh tahun yg lalu.

---

### **Peter O'Brien says**

"There are no straight lines in space; as Einstein pointed out parallel lines do not meet in infinity. They simply curve back upon themselves. We have invented the straight line to give us a sense of location on the Earth's surface. But Euclidean reference will not work in outer space. True nature, as we should understand it, is acoustic. Acoustic space has no center. It consists of boundless random resonations. It is the kind of orientation we have when we are swimming or riding a bicycle - multisensuous, full of kinetic space. Euclidean mathematics has not a real grasp of the acoustic; it is too rational." - page 133

As with all of McLuhan's writings, *The Global Village* provides an overview of the current world before the fact, over 30 years ago. Even today, the theorizations are still relevant and thought-provoking about the

nature of the world. A key line of thought in the book is the distinction between the thinking process of the western and eastern worlds and how the western world needs to become more and more accustomed with embracing and utilizing eastern thought process as a unified global village. I highly recommend this to anyone who would like to proactively get ahead in utilising a global thinking perspective on reality.

---

### **Federico Trejos says**

Vital vital vital read for understanding the world and technology of today, how to use media and how it influences us, both consciously and unconsciously, the both hemispheres alignment of the brain, the ongoing changes. Absolutely prophetic best along with Understanding Media. Technical yet approachable and useable in everyday life, assuming the moment, the realities out there, being crafted constantly. Sort of mad and genius..

---

### **Nick Mather says**

It is amazing how prescient McLuhan was. Some of this text reads like prophecy. The Global Village, as McLuhan imagined it, wasn't the utopia most people assume. There is much to think about in this text and it demands more than one reading.

---

### **Mica says**

I love media theory. I am a geek for it.

I am taking my time reading this not because it's particularly heavy - although it is more dense than some of his other works - but because I am savoring the words. These are the kinds of words that inspire me to make things and think differently about the world around me. I'll update this when I have more thoughts...

---

### **David Balfour says**

#### **Orientalism and Pop Psychology**

This is an extremely dated hippie book, jam-packed with cheesy Orientalism and the worst of pop psychology. According to McLuhan and Powers, the mysterious East is so perfect - so Tao. Us brutish Westerners would never understand, but our continued survival depends on it. They take the left-brain right-brain thing to a ridiculous extreme. There is literally a chart in here connecting the word 'spiritual' to one part of the brain. I mean - what? They're so specific about which parts of the brain do which things that it reminds me of phrenology. Certainly they are out of their element when it comes to psychology.

The authors criticise the 'left-brain' mode of experience which seeks hierarchy and linearity at all costs, and then go ahead and commit the worst crimes of that approach. They insist on putting everything into an extremely unconvincing binary world view. They reduce everything to a dichotomy between east and west, left and right brain, and implicitly place them into a hierarchy with a clear preference for 'oriental' modes of experience. Their attempts to connect this binary thesis to everything they touch are forced and overzealous, like when they randomly drop the idea that dyslexia is probably caused by Western culture's failed attempt to

adapt to an Eastern way of experiencing things. Also, the final chapter was of little interest to me as an Australian. It's an essay on Canada as a place of cultural borderlines that really only seems vaguely related to the main themes of the book.

### **Visual and Acoustic Space**

Having said all that, some of the ideas in this book are astonishingly relevant. The book's central metaphor about visual and acoustic space is more powerful than the authors probably could have imagined in 1980. They write about a hybrid between the computer and phone being the next big thing, and predict the fundamental nature of the Internet with incredible accuracy. They describe it as a shift from a visual mode of experience to an acoustic one. Visual space has defined Western culture since the time of Aristotle. In visual space, everything is clearly delineated. Our visual percepts are defined by solid boundaries, and we focus on one thing at a time, apart from its environment. Acoustic space is less centralised. Sounds come from multiple sources simultaneously and ricochet throughout the environment; it's much harder to focus on one centre apart from its environment. Traditional media are distinctly visual - in print, for example, we focus on words one at a time in sequence; there is a clear, linear structure as in visual space. In the new media, there are a myriad of centres; each user is both producer and consumer, everywhere and nowhere, dislocated and simultaneous. New media are decentralising - there is no authoritative voice anymore:

“Electronic man loses touch with the concept of a ruling center as well as the restraints of social rules based on interconnection. Hierarchies constantly dissolve and reform. The computer, the satellite, the data base, and the nascent multi-carrier telecommunications corporation will break apart what remains of the old print-oriented ethos” (92).

When everything is instantaneous, time and space are contracted and we all move within an eternal instant: The body of electronic man “will remain in one place but his mind will float out into the electronic void, being everywhere at once in the data bank” (97). All of a sudden, we're existing in a synchronous or ahistorical mode. It really reminds me of the Neoplatonic One, an absolute that simultaneously contains us and is contained within us; a circle without borders, each of its individual manifestations being the centre. You can also see hints of this sense in the disjointed nature of postmodernism, with its total disregard for historicity.

I also like that the authors challenge the Shannon-Weaver model of communications, revealing it to be hopelessly linear and outdated. They suggest that the multiplicity and instantaneity of new technologies may even begin to challenge the dominant notion of efficient cause. Complex networks of instantaneous, simultaneous interaction like the stock market or Twitter actually make the notion of efficient cause less useful, or less relevant – it seems more pertinent to speak in terms of general correlations and tendencies; qualitative explanations may actually be more helpful than quantitative. The authors also suggest that new technologies may challenge the subject-object distinction characteristic of visual space, where we endeavour to behold everything in isolation and from a detached perspective, as the reader of a phonetic alphabet processes the orderly contours of a newspaper article, or a scientist records data only after defining dependent and independent variables. The authors suggest that it'll become increasingly difficult to look at phenomena in isolation because context shapes content; in other words, the medium is the message.

### **Facebook**

Here's a visionary prediction of the information marketplace spearheaded by Facebook and Google:

“Communication media of the future will accentuate the extensions of our nervous systems, which can be disembodied and made totally collective. New population patterns will fuel the shift from smokestack industries to a marketing-information economy, primarily in the US and

Europe. Video-related technologies are the critical instruments of such change. The ultimate interactive nature of some video-related technologies will produce the dominant right-hemisphere social patterns of the next century. For example, the new telecommunication multi-carrier corporation, dedicated solely to moving all kinds of data at the speed of light, will continually generate tailor-made products and services for individual consumers who have pre-signalled their preferences through an ongoing data base. Users will simultaneously become producers and consumers” (83).

### **Tribalism**

McLuhan and Powers also seem to predict the renewed tribalism and populist xenophobia we're seeing across the western world in response to globalisation - endless hysteria about immigration and cultural incompatibility:

“Video-related technologies compress the sequent into the simultaneous and emphasize the pre-literate group will, re-establishing the tribal chieftain” (99).

They describe technology as an extension of the body, so it becomes the platform for an almost physical invasion of another person's space:

“We extend parts of ourselves into the environment to do some intensely elevated function [...] and then find ways to fight about it [...] The first humanoid uttering his first intelligible grunt, or “word,” outered himself and set up a dynamic relationship with himself, other creatures, and the world outside his skin [...] Conflict occurs, not because of human inefficiency, but technology moving at incompatible speeds” (93).

### **Vaporwave**

The authors even manage to shed light on this new technologically-focused nostalgia for the 80s using the concept of ground and figure in art. Figure is the focal point of the piece and ground is the background or environment:

"In the order of things, ground comes first. The figures arrive later. Coming events cast their shadows before them. The ground of any technology is both the situation that gives rise to it as well as the whole environment of services and disservices that the technology brings with it. These are the side effects, and they impose themselves haphazardly as a new form of culture [...] As an old ground is displaced by the content of the new situation, it becomes available to ordinary attention as figure. At the same time a new nostalgia is born" (6).

McLuhan and Powers extend the concept of figure and ground to technology, with figure being the central, highly visible part of a new technology, and ground being the hidden context that it brings with it and from which it's born. When a new technology or figure brings a new ground, the old ground becomes figure - for the first time, it's conceptualised consciously and not taken for granted, giving rise to some sort of generational nostalgia like the current fascination with videotape and corporate muzak.

---