

# **The Evolution of Format: How Different Media Types Inform the Way We Think About Learning and Teaching**

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**Description:** This facilitated discussion is centered on communication technology throughout the ages, from orality, through manuscript and print culture, on to digital. We will consider the potential of electronic communication in general, and eportfolios more specifically, to accommodate multiple literacies and showcase a wider variety of student skills and abilities.

## **Definitions:**

**Oral Culture** – Any culture that is primarily oral and does not have a written alphabet or literature (Ong, 2002). Can refer to contemporary oral cultures as well as historical cultures

## **Defining characteristics of orality (Ong, 2002):**

- Situated
- Communal
- Repetitive/Rhythmic
- Additive/ Aggregative
- Formulaic
- Traditional
- Emphasis on process, not product

## **Affordances of orality:**

- Engaging
- Dynamic
- Collaborative/participatory
- Connects past to present

## **Limitations of orality:**

- Access limited to time and place
- Ephemeral
- Concrete

**Manuscript Culture** – The transitional period between the end of orality as the dominant mode of communication and the beginning of print culture

## **Defining characteristics of manuscripts:**

- Transitional
- Illustrated
- Idiosyncratic

- Emphasis on product, not process

**Affordances of manuscripts:**

- Slightly more access than orality
- Slightly more permanent than orality
- Unique

**Print Culture** – The era after the invention of the printing press, specifically with regard to the emphasis on text.

**Defining characteristics of print:**

- Abstract
- Analytic
- Organized
- Static
- Emphasis on product, not process

**Affordances of print:**

- Permanence
- Access

**Limitations of print:**

- Freezes history
- Permanence
- Can disprivilege other ways of knowing/communicating (Anderson, 2006)

**Digital Age** – The era of rapid, electronic communication. More specifically refers to the period after the advent of Web 2.0.

**Defining characteristics of digital format:**

- Instant
- Collaborative/social
- Dynamic
- Customizable
- Emphasis on process and product

### **Discussion Questions (answer as many or as few as you like)**

What kind of skills and abilities would be most valued in each era? How might the digital format allow for a more inclusive skill set?

What kinds of literacies are required to be successful in the digital age? How can we best prepare ourselves and our students?

What are the socio-economic consequences of each era? Can the electronic format set the stage for more culturally sensitive learning and assessment?

Which disciplines might benefit the most from the use of multimedia? Is it most useful for the curricular, co-curricular, or both?

How can we restructure the assignments we give to students, based on affordances of the digital format? Work with your group to design a sample assignment for any class or discipline that could become an artifact in an eportfolio.

## References and Recommended Reading

Anderson, B. R. O. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Rev ed.). London; New York: Verso.

Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education* (1st ed.). Durango, Colo.: Kivakí Press.

Eisenstein, E. L. (1980; 1979). *The printing press as an agent of change: Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ong, W. J. (2002; 1982). *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. London; New York: Routledge.