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The Life of Print

Michael Gorman

California State University - Fresno

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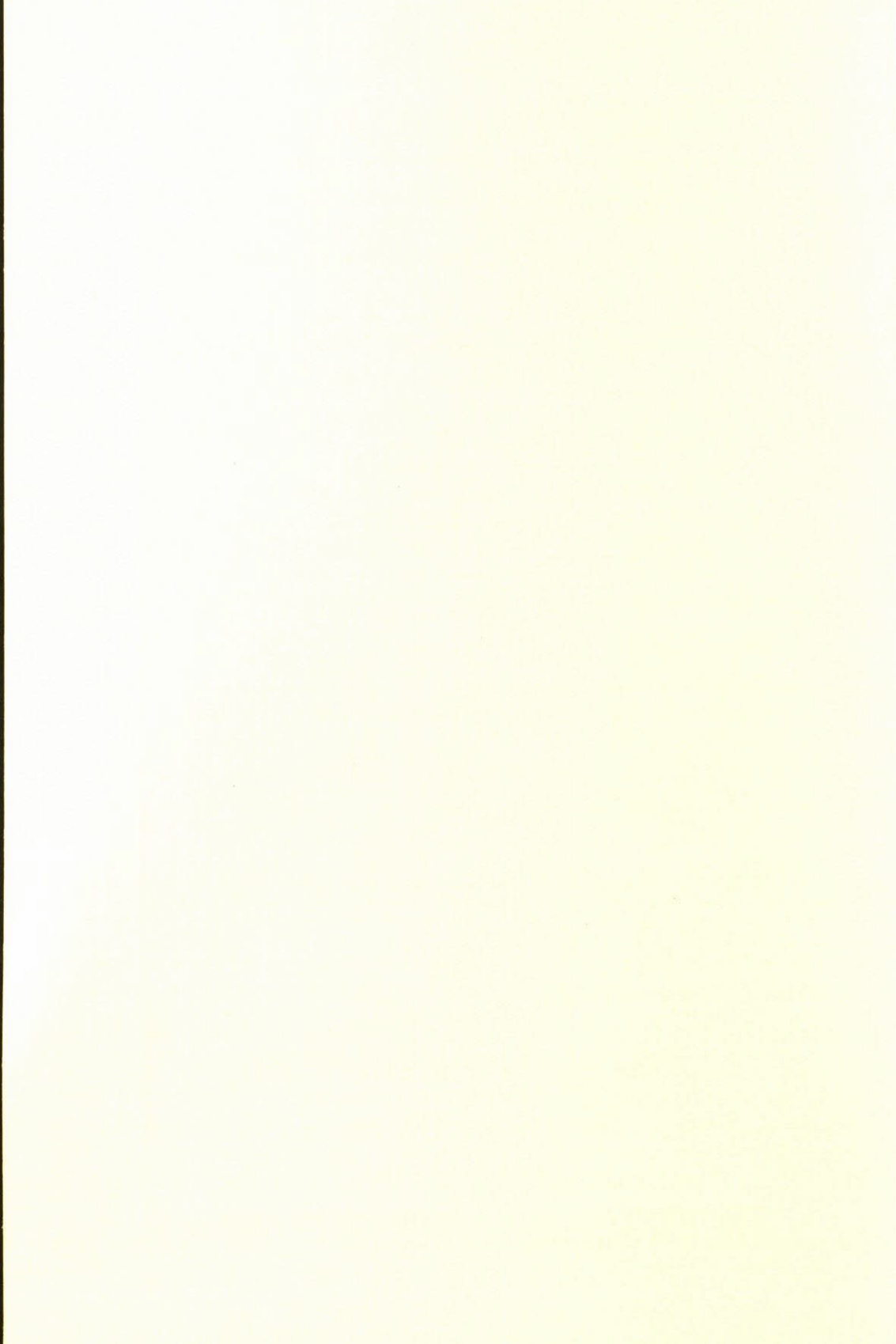
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The Life of Print

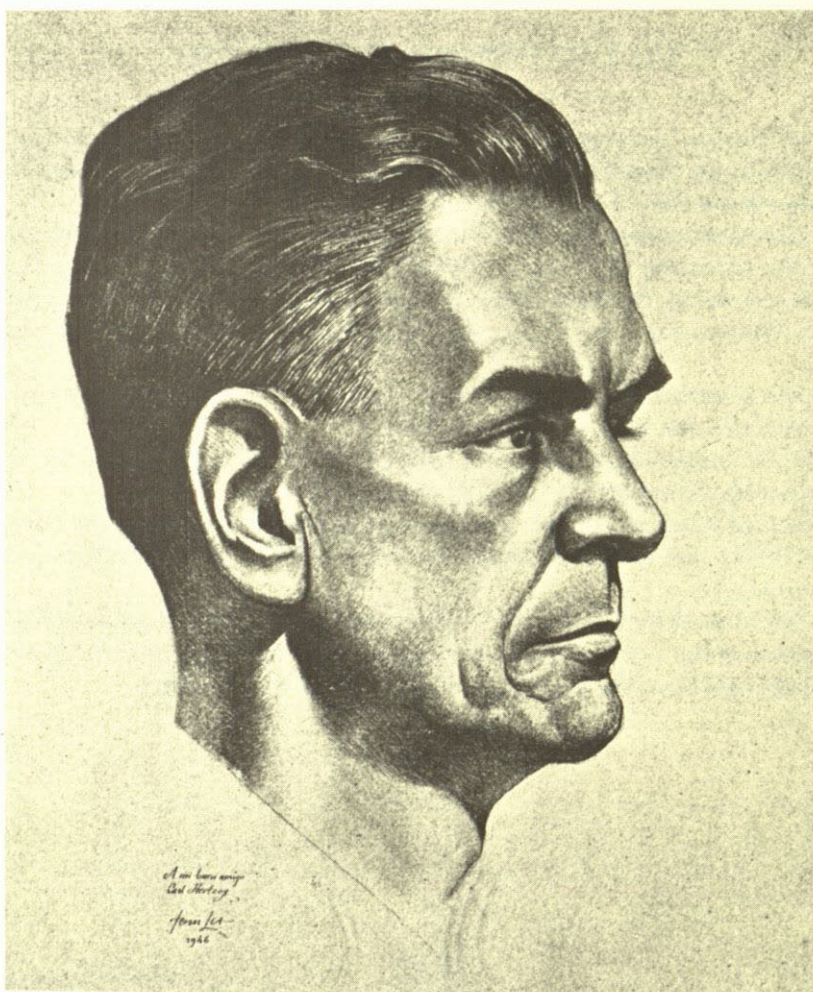
Michael Gorman
Dean of Library Services
California State University, Fresno



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(Drawing by Tom Lea, 1946)

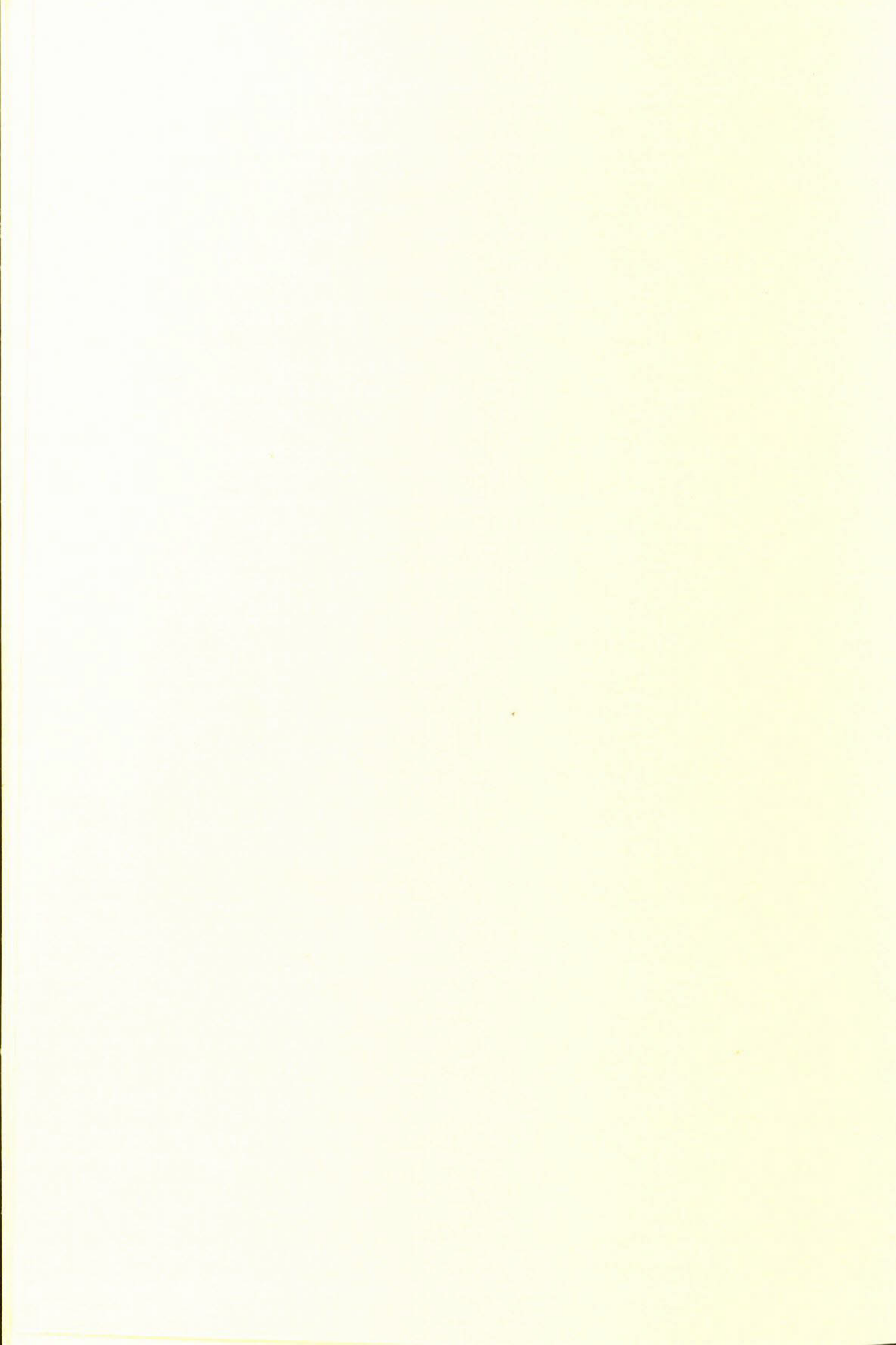
J. Carl Hertzog
1902 — 1984

The Life of Print

Michael Gorman
Dean of Library Services
California State University, Fresno

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Carl Hertzog Lecture Series, No. 7



All the jumbled voices flying through the air – the video voices and the music voices, the computer-message voices and the talk-radio voices – all the voices that, we are told, are destined to drown out the quiet voices of books. But a book, amid the din of the new and insistent voices, can be the strongest clearest voice of all. A book – one voice on a printed page, speaking intimately and persuasively to one person who is listening to that voice on a timetable of his or her own choosing. Bob Greene¹

When it comes to the topic of the future of books and print, one can find in the writings and speeches of pundits, politicians, and academics the kind of semantic confusion and elision that bespeaks the half-digested idea – the failure to think through what one is saying. This intellectual skating on thin ice began, I believe, in the peculiar usage in recent years of the word “information” – a word that has become so distorted and elastic as to be meaningless. Given that one can use “information” to mean anything from a small set of numbers to a masterpiece of cumulative analytical analysis, one is free to assume that there is no qualitative difference between different kinds of “information.” Further, given that assumption, it is an easy, if intellectually shoddy, move to assume that all kinds of “information” can and should be digitized and that the imminent “Information Age” will not need books and other non-digitized carriers of “information” and, therefore, libraries and librarians would soon take their place on the ash-heap of history. Regrettably, this specious line of reasoning has been swallowed by many, including many in my own profession. The professional literature is swamped with drivel about “virtual libraries” and “libraries without walls,” yet the central practical problems behind those phrases are largely ignored. Plato quotes Socrates as telling us that an unexamined life is not worth living²; unexamined assumptions are scarcely a sure foundation for deciding on the future of learning, culture, and the records of humankind.

The inability to distinguish between *knowledge* and *information* goes well beyond the concerns of libraries and even of learning. One has only to listen to radio and TV talk-shows of the call-in variety to realize what happens when a lot of people have a lot of information and little or no knowledge. A fact, a supposition, a saying, a quotation, a random datum

has lodged itself in the mind of a caller who believes, in passing it on, that he or she is adding to the general discourse in a useful way and/or is showing him/herself to good advantage as someone who is "informed." Unfortunately, that piece of information was not absorbed by the caller into a corpus of knowledge possessed by him or her. It has no context and goes out into the contextless void that is the modern substitute for public debate. It is the perfect world of information – the antithesis of knowledge, understanding, and learning – and perfectly preshadows the world that would be if all human records were digitized and sucked into the black hole of the "virtual library."

The debate about the future of print is really not about print on paper versus electronic technology (after all, today most print on paper is the result of computer technology). It is about reading and the best means to read. I believe with all my heart that reading is important to the individual and to society and that print on paper is best for sustained reading leading to the acquisition of knowledge. This in no way contradicts the fact that electronic communication leading to reading from screens or printouts (an inferior form of print-on-paper) is highly suitable for the acquisition of information and data. In all the debate and confusion, there is a broad measure of agreement that reading is good, that literacy matters, and that those who do not (or cannot) read are at a severe societal disadvantage. There is not broad agreement on the value of print-on-paper in the form of books and printed journals when it comes to transmitting knowledge. Why? Because, though librarians and others emphasize the importance of literacy, they think of it as being concerned with the acquisition of functional skills by the disadvantaged. Moreover, in terror of being considered out-of-date, many librarians have tacitly agreed on the false egalitarianism that does not allow a qualitative distinction between, say, reading *War and Peace* and watching *MTV*. Sustained reading leading to the acquisition of knowledge *is* important and *is* good for the individual and for society. I would like here to demonstrate that print-on-paper (the "book") is the best vehicle for sustained reading and is likely to remain so for the foreseeable future.

The health of print

Despite the best efforts of those who, for a variety of reasons, predict (and have predicted for many years) that print on paper is due to be replaced in the near future, there are no objective reasons to believe that this is so. Those who would like print to die invariably make wildly mistaken

assumptions about the economics of print, ignore or deny the advantages of print, and otherwise distort or ignore the facts in order to reach their conclusions. Common sense demands that we pay attention to the real world market of print-on-paper, the real advantages of that medium, and realistic economic issues.

Print: the real numbers

Listening to the all-electronic advocates, the reader is likely to believe that books, magazines, and newspapers are gasping their last dying breaths. The extremist Raymond Kurzweil³ maintains that "...the day of fully viable virtual books is not far off" and "...it has become accepted that computerized books [sic] are *better* than the paper variety in certain categories."⁴ It turns out that he is talking about reference works and other containers of data and information and is completely ignoring the issue of sustained reading. The doomsayers always use the tired cliché of the buggy-whip industry – allegedly killed by the automobile. Publishers, librarians, and readers are seen as an aggregation of sentimentalists resisting the inevitability of progress. In the technovandals' view the print on paper industries are fading away and should be gone in another couple of years – a vivid projection that has the simple disadvantage of being untrue.

Here are some facts:

Book sales are increasing, not decreasing.

More than 800 million *adult* books are sold each year in America (roughly eight books per household).

There is a vast and expanding children and juvenile book market: The entire publishing/printing industry has a more than \$100 billion turnover in the United States, possibly four times that worldwide, and is continuing to grow.

Public library book circulation also continues to grow.

Throughout the twentieth century, librarians have joined others in suggesting that some new medium would sweep away print. While those suggestions of total displacement – whether by phonograph, radio, television, or other diversions, real and imaginary – have always been wrong, at least there were plausible numbers to back up the predictions. That is by no means the case today. One important delusion is that the electronic revolution has created a new source of data previously available only in books and magazines. It has been a good many years since the majority of data was available in books and magazines, if indeed it ever was.

Let us not forget that most data are meaningless outside a local sphere, of temporary use even within that sphere, and will never become widely useful.

Magazines

Magazines do die. They always have and always will. They are always replaced by new titles. New magazines are springing up rapidly and some of them are incredibly successful. Indeed, the most striking voice of the multimedia electronic-everything field is a new print magazine called *Wired*. The avant-garde creators of this publication tried to publish it in electronic form but soon came to the conclusion that the best way to do what they needed to do was with ink on paper. Meanwhile, *PC Magazine*, a highly specialized periodical that is bulky enough to frighten off the casual reader, circulates considerably more than a million paid copies twenty-two times a year – and both *PC/Computing* and *PC World* circulate only slightly less than a million. Bookstores, supermarkets, and the mails are crowded with magazines of all kinds – magazines with astonishingly high production values and great appeal to specialist markets and the general public. Not only is there no evidence of a decline in the magazine market; there is considerable evidence that market is competitive, productive, innovative, and flourishing.

Motivation

It is difficult to imagine why it is that some writers persist in saying that print on paper is a dying technology when its sales continue to increase and at a rate substantially higher than inflation. What is the combination of stubbornness and gall that leads them to persist in saying the book is dead when two-thirds of American households buy books and two-thirds of adult Americans use libraries? There are base motives of course (the desire to puff a technology from which one wishes to make money, etc.) but there must also be people who, dazzled by the prospect of being seen as futuristic sages, are simply clinging to their wrong headed forecasts. The late philosopher Jimmy Durante used to do a routine in the middle of which he would tell us that “they thought Columbus was crazy . . . they thought Galileo was crazy. . .” and ending “they thought my Uncle Louie was crazy, and he *was* crazy.” For every example of amazing prescience of which we read, there must be thousands of forecasts that turned out to be plain wrong and have been forgotten. The Death of the Book crowd belong in the second category and will be similarly forgotten by a merciful history.

Reading: still best on paper

One of the sillier forecasts of an all-electronic future is the idea that everyone will read from computer devices. Such a thing may not be utterly impossible. It is certainly implausible for a number of reasons. This does not imply that computer devices are not the better technology for communicating data and small packets of information but, for linear text of more than a few paragraphs, print on paper is the preferred medium. It is also the best available medium for high-resolution reproduction of graphics. It is true that a twenty dollar CD-ROM can include very many illustrations, but it cannot offer the detail and depth of full-color printing.

Appropriate technology: books work

Books are the result of a highly refined technology – printing – developed over several hundred years and made more cost-effective and timely by today's computer technology. They should, and almost certainly will, survive and prosper. Now, and for the foreseeable future, no electronic medium can begin to compare with ink on paper for readability, even if we discount the aesthetic pleasure of the book or magazine itself as a factor. The problems of readability are not being solved and there is reason to doubt that some of them may ever be solvable. I would like to address three of those problems briefly: *light*, *resolution*, and *speed of reading*.

Light

Virtually every readable electronic display uses transmitted light – light shining in your face as you read – which is inherently more tiring than the reflected light used for reading print on paper. Inevitably, a reader of a transmitted light text will stop reading sooner, will read more slowly, and will get more headaches.

Resolution

Electronic displays resolve at between seventy-two and ninety-six dots per inch – some a little higher, cheap ones a little lower. High-quality displays have ninety to ninety-seven picture elements per inch; the triads of phosphor dots are spaced 0.26 or 0.28 millimeters apart, and there are 25.4 millimeters to an inch. The densest displays available (other than in a few specialized markets) use Trinitron tubes that have, in theory, a maximum of 101 picture elements per inch (a theoretical maximum that assume that the electron guns can focus absolutely precisely at all locations and at all times). Engineers have asserted that real-world precision is likely to be

considerably lower, perhaps only half as much. In reality, most displays cannot be used at their highest resolution, because most software is not designed to take proper advantage of that resolution. In practice, most modern personal computer users are likely to see resolutions of seventy to seventy-five dots per inch. The *lowest* resolution of printed text is between three hundred and six hundred dots per inch – the resolution of ink jet and laser printers. Many magazines and books are prepared from imagesetters resolving at 1,200 to 2,400 lines per inch. Thus, books, magazines and most other printed documents typically have from *16 to 1,200 times* as many elements per square inch when compared to screens. (Three hundred dots per inch is sixteen times the print density of seventy-five dots per inch, not four: there are 90,000 dots per square inch as compared to 5,625.) The result? Ten-point type is easily read on the page, and eight-point type is not too difficult for those with normal eyesight. On the screen, the reader will squint at ten points, and eight points is almost hopeless. Usually, what is seen as ten point type on the screen is actually enlarged at least 20 to 40 percent from actual size. Those who imagine a world in which lengthy texts could only be read from the screen tend to resort to hand-waving when confronted with the resolution factor, rarely referring to any real-world devices that solve the problem.

Speed and comprehension

Light and resolution are problems that affect the speed at which one can read. So does area; one can normally only see about half to a third of a print book page on a screen, even at the degraded resolution of the screen. (For magazines with relatively small body text, the figures are even worse.) Some estimates are that reading from a screen is about 30 per cent slower than reading from a printed page, but that is probably only true for difficult factual material that needs to be read word-for-word. If a reader is skimming or browsing or reading light fiction, there is no comparison at all – reading from the page will be several times faster than reading from the screen. (To be fair, there are many cases in which the screen will be much faster than the printed page – not for reading, but for getting to the short passages to be read for specific informational purposes.) Consider the most degraded print with which most people deal – the daily newspaper, printed at high speeds on low-grade paper. Given a fifteen-inch display and with the text set for comfortable reading, it is most likely that there will be less than one-eighth of a newspaper page on a screen. Thus, to do the equivalent of a five-second scan of a front page, the screen must be rewritten at least eight times.

Most writers and editors have learned that editing requires hard copy because the editor does not see as much in the text when it is read on a screen. It is likely that the extra mental effort involved in reading from a screen distracts the editor from the task of focusing on sentence structure and the like. Whatever the reasons may be, text prepared only on the screen usually shows less coherence, literacy, and grammatical accuracy than text that has been reviewed in printed form. If that is true, then it is also likely to be true that what is read from the screen does not have the impact of the same text read on the printed page.

There are other problems with computers as replacements for printed media, to be sure. Even the best notebook computers are vastly less convenient than paperback books and mass-market magazines for reading on the fly, during odd moments and in odd locations and notebook computers require batteries, representing an additional cost and ecological problem in an area of technology that does not promise rapid improvement.

Usability: print for long texts

The point is not that the technology is lagging and that we should all just wait for a few years for all these problems to be solved. Some of them may be. Others will not. The point is that we have a first-rate medium for extended reading: it is called print on paper. In a real sense, those who advance the electronic media for sustained reading are hawking a flawed solution to a non-existent problem.

Hypertext and linear text

Some futurists assert that making text accessible at the paragraph level, with user-defined links to other paragraphs (a form known as "hypertext"), inherently makes the text more worthwhile. Serious prose writers and serious readers will disagree. Order and cumulative exposition are significant to well-written linear text that seeks to impart knowledge. Paragraphs in substantial books only have meaning in the context of what precedes and follows them. In addition, hypertext is not free-text searching – it requires that links be established and a hypertext limits the reader to the links that someone has prepared. If that person is the author, then the author's job has become much larger while the text itself is, paradoxically, diminished. Not only must text be cut down to bite-size chunks, but the author must prepare multiple sequences, presumably with some sense that they will all be readable. Almost all authors are serious about taking or creating knowledge and imposing form and shape on that knowledge so

that *their* vision is presented to the reader – not a vision that will arise from serendipity or, more likely, will not arise at all.

If the creator of the hypertext version is someone other than the author of the original text, that person is assuming considerable authorial presence. This is a new level of editorial intrusion that raises significant questions. A few writers and some readers fail to appreciate the virtues of the cumulative presentation of knowledge that linear text affords. Texts that do not aim to present a coherent argument or a global picture of their subject rising beyond the purely factual work at the paragraph level. More ambitious works do not. One unfortunate aspect of paragraph-level access is that it makes development of complex arguments impossible. One writer has asserted that a good way to choose a book in order to learn a new subject was to open it to page 14, page 54, and page 140. If the reader cannot make sense of each of these random pages, this writer suggests, the book is too complex. The proponent of this theory has spectacularly missed the function of good linear texts intended to impart knowledge. By the time a reader has read pages 1 to 140, he or she should understand the subject much better than when on page 14. Indeed, if a book is designed to inform on a subject that is new to the reader, that reader has every right to be suspicious if all of, say, page 154 is instantly accessible.

Publishers: not just printers

Another of the electronic futurists' claims, particularly in the context of the imagined omnipresent Information Highway, is that it will stimulate scholarship and discussion by making us all publishers. Anyone with anything to say will be able to publish it just as effectively as anyone else. Those terrible publishers will not be able to restrict the flow of worthwhile material, and we will not have to pay for their role as printers and distributors. The same is supposedly true for journals – everyone will just post articles as they are written, thus eliminating all this nonsense with scholarly journals that, among other sins, delay publication by so long. For those already on the Internet, the common-sense response is simple – think of what the Internet user encounters every day. Then think of what can be read in the journals and books from serious and respected publishers. The contrast between random accumulations of opinion, disconnected data, unverified assertions, and contextless statements on the one hand and ordered, cumulative, authoritative presentations of knowledge and organized information on the other should make anyone think twice about the desirability of eliminating book publishers and the traditional journal process.

Publishers are not just printers and distributors. Between eighty and ninety cents of every dollar spent on books by individuals and libraries goes not only for publicity and profit, but also to development, editing, and other filtering and gatekeeping functions. Gatekeeping is an even more important function of the better scholarly journals. Given the speed and efficiency of contemporary publication techniques, the lag between article completion and publication is due far more to those gatekeeping requirements than to production and distribution delays.

Economics of print

Some writers have said that print is doomed for economic reasons. One of the false assumptions behind these forecasts is that book readership is *already* declining. It is not. With few exceptions, the numbers of books published and sold in the United States has increased each year for many years. Another bogus comparison is that between the *actual cost* of electronic distribution in a free Internet environment and the *list price* of commercial print products. This is no comparison at all, since editorial and other operations are not included in the electronic costs, while, of course, the list price of a book includes all aspects of publishing. Any rational discussion of the economics of print and electronic publishing must begin with the factual comparison of like with like.

The economics of different kinds of print publication

It is not helpful to treat print publishing as a monolithic entity. It is, in fact, made up of a large number of niches, markets, and categories. I will touch on some aspects of current print publishing, beginning with a category that should be replaced by electronic publishing and distribution.

Short-lived reference works

Abstracts and indexes are perfect examples of the kind of reference text that never made much sense as a book. In printed form they are too bulky; distribution and printing represent an unreasonable overhead; they are inherently slow to produce; and they are extremely user-unfriendly. Electronic indexes and abstracts can be much more powerful than print publications, but they still pose some problems. Finding specific items appears to be easier online or on CD-ROM, but understanding the scope of the reference work can be much more difficult. What is really available online or on that disc? How does the user gain a quick overview of the whole, since it is impossible to browse through a few pages? There are, of

course, extra costs associated with electronic reference works. Online resources require terminals or workstations. CD-ROM publications require computers and, increasingly, networking. The user needs more than a table and a good light to use an electronic index. Nevertheless, many reference products make more sense in electronic form than in paper form, and we should expect to see more such publishing in the future. Reference works that contain lengthy passages of text are not good candidates for electronic replacement for obvious reasons. Such reference works, however, are less likely to be short-lived.

Short-run books and journals

The next clearest case for electronics replacing print on paper is that of scholarly monographs and journals published in editions of a few hundred. In such cases, the cost of producing a print edition can be considerable on a per-copy basis, particularly if the materials are bulky or require color or other special considerations. While book production is remarkably inexpensive at even moderate volumes, the startup costs are high. The cost of printing and production is not the only issue, however. Short-run monographs and journals are poor candidates for electronic *publication* as such, unless many monographs or journal issues can be combined into single archival CD-ROMs. That could work economically, although it would work against timely distribution. Nevertheless, for materials unlikely to be needed very often, archival scholarly publishing in digital form may make economic sense (and will represent great economy of storage for libraries). The more feasible alternative for short-run items needed in a timely manner is electronic distribution – making them available over electronic networks. At the moment, that method still poses thorny problems of usability, authority, copyright, and the balance between access and payment, but these problems could possibly be resolved in this specialized context even if they are never resolved for general publications.

Trade books

Think about ordinary books – novels, non-fiction books, the stuff of public libraries and liberal arts and sciences collections – and large-circulation magazines and other periodicals. We already know there are good reasons why people prefer these texts (with or without graphics) in printed form, and that this preference is likely to mean that print on paper will be a part of life for the foreseeable future. Let us consider the economics of books and of large-circulation journals and other periodicals.

Electronic publishing is said to be much cheaper than print publishing. This is almost a cliché, but one that lacks the saving grace of most clichés – that they are true. Quite apart from the real (if frequently hidden or temporarily free) costs of electronic storage and networking mechanisms themselves, it is not the case that even a significant minority of the costs of printed books and journals comes from the expense of printing and distributing those materials. Print publishing involves several costs, which vary depending on the type of material that is being published. Books involve salary costs for acquisitions editors, copy editors, production editors, layout people, artists, indexers, and proofreaders. They also require expenditures for typesetting or imagesetting, platemaking and printing, binding, distribution, and publicity. There is also the important matter of profit. Periodicals may or may not require acquisitions editors, but they certainly do require editors and quite possibly reviewers; all of the other costs will also exist.

In the case of many publications, the typesetting/imagesetting costs have already been reduced or eliminated, as have some proofreading and layout costs. Books can go directly from the author's laser printer to the platemaker. There are no typesetting costs in such a case; one entire proofreading cycle could be eliminated; and the layout/production costs are relatively minor. Electronic publishing eliminates expenditures on imagesetting, printing, binding and some portion of distribution. It has no effect on the need to acquire, edit, design (for best reading), index, and publicize the publication. There is still a distribution cost, even if it is hidden; and for CD-ROM, there is both a "printing" and a distribution cost. It is also true that better (i.e., more costly) indexes are needed for electronic publications, since they are much harder to skim.

Fourteen cents in each dollar

The one area in which electronic publications are economically superior to printed publications is that of the costs of physical production and (for the moment, at least) distribution. To understand the financial comparison it is necessary to know which portion of the price of a book is due to production and distribution costs. That will vary, of course, depending on the print run, the form of binding, nature of illustrations, etc., etc. One round number for typical medium-run hardbound books is from seven-to-one to ten-to-one: that is, the cost of production and distribution is roughly 10 to 14 percent of the price. There it is – the potential savings under optimum conditions – fourteen cents in each dollar of book price. Of

course, electronic distribution and CD-ROM publishing are not free either. The book cost numbers typically include typesetting and a growing number of books do not incur typesetting charges. "Quality" paperbacks cost about two dollars a copy to print and distribute. Even for a three-hundred-page hardbound permanent-paper book, setting aside typesetting charges, the cost of physical production for a thousand-copy run is unlikely to be much more than four to six dollars per copy.

Mass-market paperbacks: the true revolution

When it comes to mass-market paperbacks, the numbers are dramatically different and favor print even more directly. Using high-speed presses and paper that is not much better than newsprint, mass-market paperbacks are so cheap to produce that publishers cannot be bothered to take unsold returns. Production costs per copy of a mass-market paperback are almost certainly well under a dollar, and probably less than fifty cents – considerably less than a CD-ROM, and probably less than any plausible means of electronic communication. Mass-market paperbacks represent the true information revolution. They may not be beautiful, but they are readable and cheap, they are everywhere, and they keep people reading. Supermarkets and most corner stores have racks of paperbacks, at least a few dozen books. That counts for a lot, particularly if there are good public libraries nearby to allow the paperback readers to go beyond the genre novels and big-name nonfiction paperbacks.

The curious economics of mass-market magazines

What about mass-market magazines – for example, anything likely to be found in a supermarket magazine rack? Such magazines may have as little as 50,000 circulation, but quite a few have circulations in the millions. Are they candidates for displacement by electronic means? Not in any future that makes sense. Subscribers and casual purchasers really do not pay most of the cost of most mass-market magazines; advertisers do. They pay those costs because they know who buys the magazines and know that print advertising works – partly because the life of the advertisement is as long as the life of the magazine issue. That also holds true for many magazines that do not appear on newsstands, including the extreme cases, the many "controlled-circulation" magazines and newspapers whose subscribers pay nothing at all for them. There is such a broad range of magazines that few sweeping statements make sense. Here is one interesting case, however: if editorial costs are eliminated (by using volunteer editors and referees),

typesetting and production costs are minimized (by using desktop publishing techniques), the best professional printing on permanent paper is used, and the magazine is distributed by professional distribution services, a 120-page quarterly, six by nine inch journal with a subscription list of 6,000 can be produced and distributed for less than ten dollars a subscriber *per year*, not including the costs of billing subscribers but also not including any offset from advertising revenues.

Newspapers: the social context

Futurists tell us that electronic publishing will bring us better newspapers. Specifically, we will have personalized newspapers – newspapers that contain all the stories that we care about, and only those stories. Moreover, these electronic newspapers will be far more up-to-date than the big city newspapers of today. (*PC Magazine* calls such papers “The Daily Me.”) Such papers probably seem desirable to some people and, if they have enough money, they can actually get something along these lines. Right now, that “something” will probably be from five to 40 screens of information (the equivalent of up to five newspaper pages) for anything from one to five dollars per day (three to fifteen times the price of a daily newspaper). “The Daily Me” may appeal to some but is a disastrous development, both from an economic and a social perspective. The economics are straightforward. A personalized paper cannot be paid for by advertising revenues, so there will be an hourly charge or a charge per item. Reading online is slow and laborious. If the *Me*-reader downloads, there will be a charge for that. Even if the charge is as low as twelve dollars an hour, which seems unlikely, how much news could be read for the price of a daily newspaper? The equivalent of a front page? What will thirty-five cents buy you in personalized daily news? Today, very little – in the future, not necessarily much more. The second economic problem with personalized daily papers is the special role of local newspaper print advertising – the stuff that actually pays for most of the daily paper. Most local newspaper print advertising differs from television advertising in that it is not just trying to make brand names stand out. A great deal of local print advertising comes from local merchants, telling the consumer who they are, what they are doing right now, what is on sale this week, and why the reader would want to visit them. Take away the newspaper audience, and many of these businesses disappear – and the local consumer’s knowledge of when and where to shop diminishes. This is not a good thing for local economics or the local sense of community.

Then there is the social aspect of *Me*-reading. Part of what the reader gets from a newspaper comes from all the headlines glanced at and from the stories that are read as a consequence, even though they would never show up in an individual's interest profile. This is one of the big advantages of the daily local paper over TV news – it has many times as much room for words and can therefore cover many more items, large and small. A typical metropolitan newspaper probably has some two hundred stories on an average day. While most will only read ten or twenty stories from beginning to end, all readers are aware of all the other headlines, thus being enabled to keep in touch with the complexities of the real world. Some of those complexities may certainly be unpleasant. That is an attribute of non-virtual reality. Being aware of what is happening in the wider world is critical to being part of a community and of society as a whole. The personal newspaper simply will not provide that connection. How many people would have Bosnia or Rwanda in their personal profiles? Virtual reality is what you want it to be – it is purged of all those nasty real-world aspects. How does a person know what is of interest until he or she reads about it? Does anyone really want a daily newspaper that deals only with predetermined interests? Should we not want to broaden our horizons? Is it really the fate of humanity to become more and more narrow, more and more specialized, until we each know everything there is to know about nothing at all. “The Daily Me” is inherently solipsistic: the reader becomes less and less aware of the realities of life and increasingly comfortable with only that which reinforces his or her own opinions and world-view. The daily newspaper is a wonderful institution deserving survival both as part of the economic life of a city and as a contribution to community.

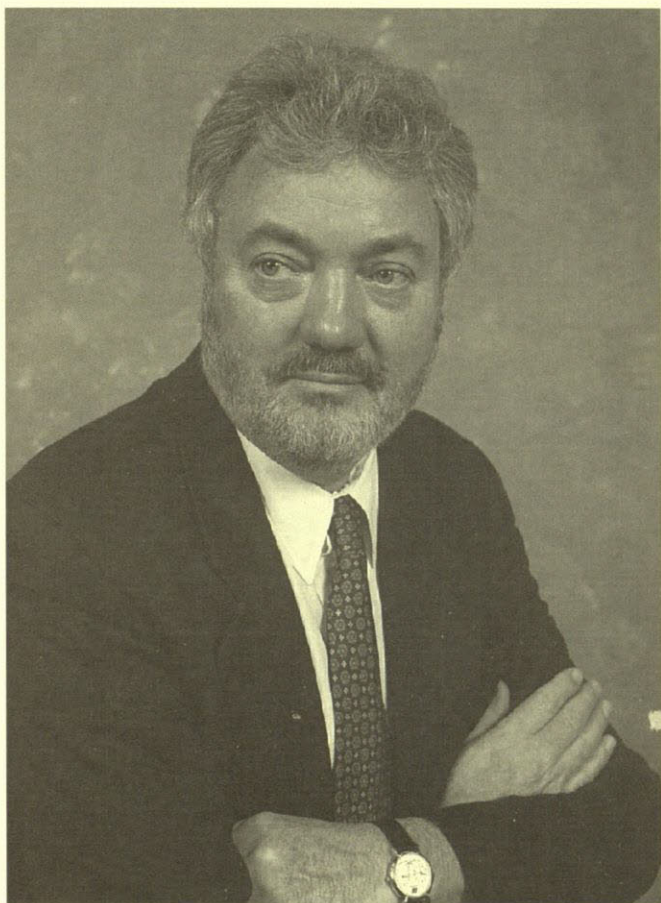
ENVOI

Louis McNeice spoke, in his poem “To posterity,” of a time when “Reading and even speaking have been replaced/By other less difficult media . . .” and wondered if the people of that world would ever experience the richness of life as do we who read. What an unutterably sad existence would be one without books and reading, without the ability to enjoy reading for its own sake and for the knowledge and understanding that books can give. Let us hope that McNeice's dark vision never becomes reality and generations yet unborn will know the pleasures of reading and that solace that reading can bring.

Thank you.

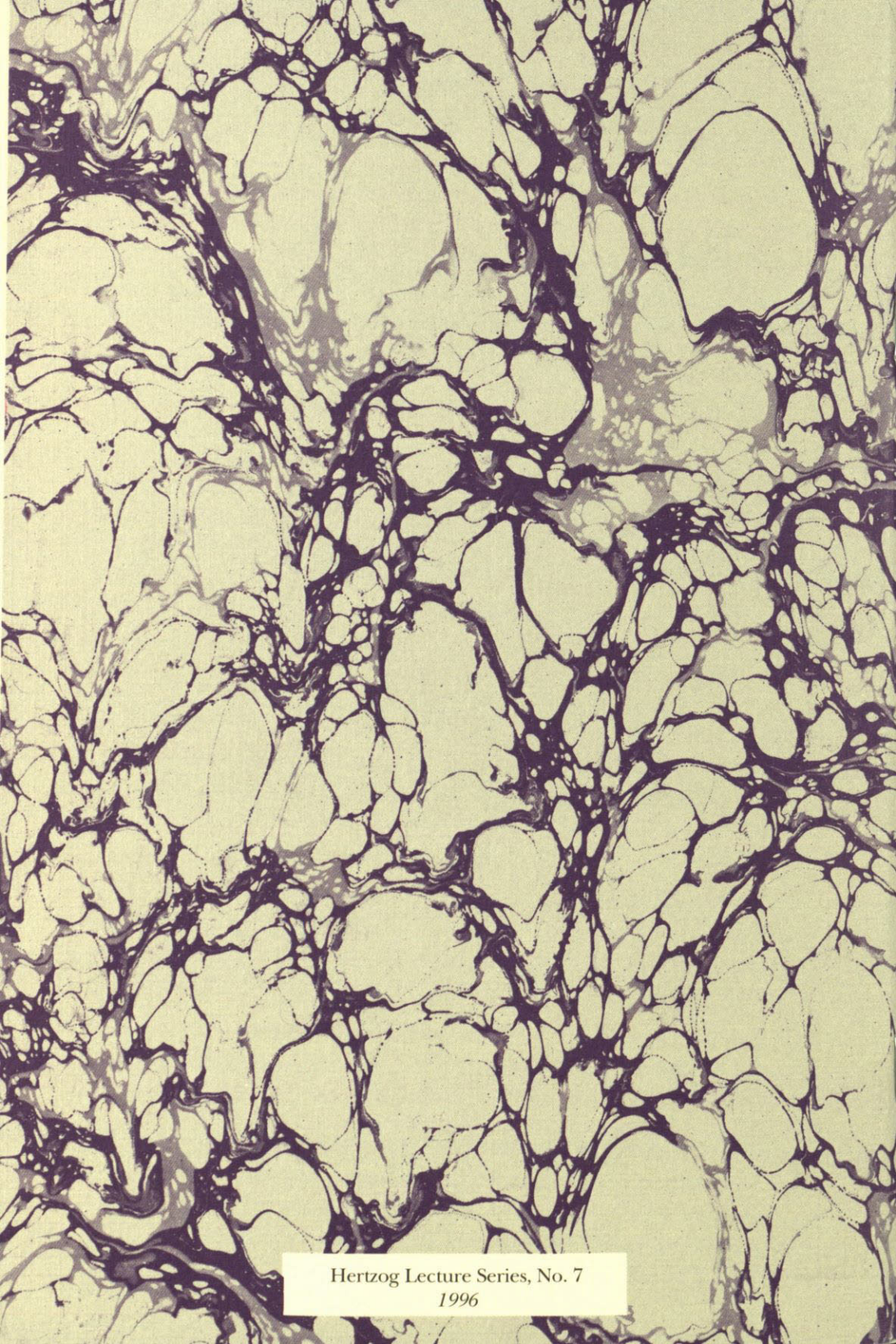
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**Michael Gorman, Dean of Library Services
California State University, Fresno**





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