

ETEC 540: Documentary

The Telephone

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Introduction

The goal of the documentary was to highlight the transition points of the telephone in literacy, culture and society. To achieve that goal I chose to focus on more than just information and look at context. Early on in my research I found that factual information was easy to find and that a quick search could tell anyone what they needed to know. Therefore, my focus was more on context. My hope in adding the commercials from pivotal points in the timeline of the telephone was to take the viewers back to that time, hopefully, creating a sense of the world when the technology was changing. The progression in the commercials along with the timeline of images and information leading up to them is designed to have the viewer question and see the developments not from the current day lens, but from that view of contrasting past and present.

Production Choices, Style, Challenges and Successes

This project had to distinct learning objectives. The first was about the telephone and the way it has shaped and changed literacy and society. The second was to use and understand the technology and tools needed to convey that information through video.

I chose to use Camtasia as I had seen it mentioned on the Mattermost TownSquare channel and I knew nothing about it, but figured it would be good to learn. I also borrowed a green screen from school, because I had never used it before and wanted to learn. These were both good choices but increased the learning curve.

My initial style strategy was to do a news cast, and I had my daughter as the news anchor. I found this to time consuming and hard to focus on relevant information. As such the style changed as the video progressed. The “reporter in the field” section was an attempt to tie into the news cast theme, but I found when watching it that it was boring and did not grab attention. Therefore, I switched to a narrated with images style as the video progressed. I did try and tie the news cast back in at the end to maintain some continuity.

Overall, I learned a lot using the green screen and video production software, but focusing too much on the technology and making it “pretty” made it more challenging to address the topic. Therefore, if I had to do it again I would simplify my production expectations and do more of simple fact based rolling documentary with less actual video and video editing.

Video

Link: <https://youtu.be/nkB2TMmxs5U>

Script

Intro

<Open with Hailey at desk with old phone –

Hello and welcome to the documentary telephone.

Today we will discover how the telephone was invented and how it changed the world. The name AGB stands out but many people do not know why. Well, I am going to tell you. AGB was the inventor of the telephone. On March 10, 1876 AGB transmitted the sentence “Mr. Watson come here I want to see you”(Long, 2018). These words forever changed how we communicate. AGB was almost not the official inventor of the telephone.

To learn more lets go to our reporter in the field.

<Transition

Few inventions throughout our history have changed the way we communicate quite like the telephone. From simple sound to voice to thousands of bits of information sent through wires and then through air the telephone has changed drastically over time and it has also changed us and how we communicate in and see the world we live in. Let’s go back to the beginning and look at where it all started.

In 1876 AGB invented the telephone, but its not as simple as that. (CNETTV, 2016) There was a technology race of sorts on in the world and many inventors were working simultaneously to crack the code. In that era, simple code could be sent over wire in the form of telegraph, but the world was looking for a way to send human voice. Can you imagine a world where letters and telegraphs were the only way to communicate over great distances?

The race to invent the telephone is a mind boggling one and for the purpose of this documentary not as important as the changes that occurred as a result of the invention. However, to full understand the context of what was happening, let look at a short video from CNET that helps explain what was happening leading up to the invention of the telephone by AGB.

Video (CNETTV, 2016)

Now that we know when the telephone was invented and some context to what was happening in the world at the time, let's look at how the telephone changed the world. The telephone is one of the few inventions that impacts home, work and education. It took years for the telephone to move from being a device of the rich to a device for all, but when it did, it impacted every part of society. The invention of the telephone created jobs, such as switch board operators, line installers, service technicians or even telemarketing, and it eliminated jobs such as telegraph operator, switch board operators, messengers and created less demand on written communication.

The telephones changed social relationships too. No longer did distance effect your ability to maintain a relationship. Friends and family could now connect across the globe. In essence the telephone made the world a smaller place.

To understand where the world was at in 1954, 78 years after AGB invented the telephone let's look at a commercial made by AT & T called "now you can dial", using your own lenses and filter of how you see the phone today, take yourself back to when the world was changing. The transition to the rotary phone, dial tone and busy signal, meant moving away from operators and making the phone more accessible to all.

Video (Skinner, 2011)

I hope you found that commercial as interesting as I did. It's fascinating to look back at how far the world has come. In reading some of the modern comments on that video, one that made me laugh but is amusingly true was "if that video had to teach people about the rotary, dial tone and busy signal, no wonder grandma can't use an iPhone." Makes you realise how conditioned we are with modern technology that we take for granted how different life was without it.

Let's take the word hello for example, most just take for granted that the word hello has always been used as a greeting. However, the word hello only dates back to 1827 according to oxford English dictionary (Hello | Definition of hello in English by Oxford Dictionaries). And hello did not become "hi" until the telephone arrived. Proof that from its inception the telephone began changing the way we spoke to one another (Krulwich, 2011)

It was Thomas Edison who urged the people who used his phone to say "hello" when answering. Inventor Alexander Graham Bell, thought the better word was "ahoy." It was the invention of the telephone book that settled this debate. The first phone book included a How To sections on their first pages and "hello" was the official greeting (Krulwich, 2011).

In fact, the first phone book ever published, by the District Telephone Company of New Haven, Connecticut, in 1878 (with 50 subscribers listed) told users to begin their conversations with "a firm and cheery 'hulloa.'" (Krulwich, 2011).

The first mobile phone call was made in 1973, (Seward, 2013) and by the mid 1990's portable or cellular phone were becoming a necessary part of everyday life. Let's take a minute to watch this 1990 commercial from radio shack on their latest portable phone at the time.

Video (M, 2010)

An interesting transition happened between 1973 and 1995, when the first smart phone was officially invented (Tweedie, 2015) Up until that point the phone primarily shaped oral communication, how we spoke and the way we shared information orally. The invention of the smartphone changed that, the popularization of text based communication, created emoji's, shortened writing such as LOL, or TTYL and other ever changing additions. A 2010 study by the PEW research Center found that the smartphone was actually changing people's brains, and that a significant number of people could not go more than an hour between checking their phone and not having their phone caused them anxiety (LaMotte, 2017).

To compare and contrast the earlier portable phone commercial we watched earlier, let watch a current commercial to highlight the transition from a phone for everybody to a device for everybody (LaMotte, 2017).

Video (Motorola, 2017)

Notice the comparison from the earlier commercials, no longer is it about educating people how to use the phone, now it is about having a phone in everyone's home, office, workplace and life. In the final commercial it's about the phone being a necessary part of everyone lives and the assumption that you cannot live without one. In reality, it's no longer about the phone anymore, now it's about being connected in every way and the word is a holdover from the past.

Back to you Hailey for a final word

Thank you,....

The phone has shaped every part of our lives today and continues to change how we communicate. I wonder how much more it will continue to shape how we communicate a 100 years from now.

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