

# English Abstract

*Media History. The Meanings and Transformations of Communication from Speech to Bits*

*Media History* is an overview and a synthesis of the history of media. It explores media history from the evolution of language to social media, analysing the development of media through different approaches. The emphasis is on the post-Gutenberg era – since the invention of the printing press in the early modern period. The overviews include the international histories of the main media technologies as well as certain features of Finnish media history.

The study approaches the development of media not only as a historical continuum but also thematically: What role has the media played in the public sphere and democracy; commerce and politics; modernity; everyday life; and the world view?

The book stresses the importance of seeing the historical meanings of media in the wider societal and cultural context. Although technological innovations have created and shaped media, politics and the economy have often been central to the development of communication. On the other hand, it is crucial to understand that media does not develop if it does not meet human needs and cannot adapt to cultural and societal conventions. Furthermore, it is a two-way process: media has often played an important role in shaping science, politics, the economy, and everyday life.

*Media History* also discusses different ways of studying media in history. The central view of the book is the idea of seeing media as an evolution rather than a revolution: media has developed step by step in terms of its history, not in terms of leaps into a totally new era. One of the purposes of the book is to provide a historical perspective for the 'revolution talk' regarding contemporary digital culture – to dispel the idea that we would now live in an extraordinary time that has never existed before in the history of media.