

Exploring Food Communications

Christina Carambia

Contact Me

<https://thefoodcommunication.com/>

My Proposal

As the owner of Underground Greens, a food scarcity advocate, and a student enrolled in the MS Information Design Technology (IDT) program at SUNY Polytechnic Institute, my original intent was to design a new series of blogs for the Underground Greens' website by successfully integrating my previous work in food scarcity, which was developed during the completion of the BA Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) program at SUNY Poly, with the knowledge derived from my participation in this course: IDT 507 Information Technology, in an attempt to create an original perspective, which would, hopefully, effectively attract and interest my customers during these Covid-19 times. While I did create the intended blog series, which allowed me to gain experience with this particular information design platform, the topic of "Exploring Food Communications", in conjunction with this course material, took on a life of it's own.

Underground Greens is a year-round farm model, which has been developed to address the complex problem of food scarcity through food production, food knowledge, and workshops, specifically in food deserts located in rural New York. I believe creating relatable, intriguing, media messages through blog posts is necessary to maintain a trustworthy, solid connection with my customers, but my research took me to a place of larger, interconnectedness, which I was unaware of prior to being exposed to the knowledge presented within this course, and it was an unexpected, profound experience. I believe this experience pushed me beyond my comfort zone and allowed me to discover the concept of food communications, as a stand-alone topic.

The integration of the knowledge gained through this course and my previous studies allowed me to better understand the connectedness of food communications, and how those communications were effected by advances in technology throughout the various eras, which include: pre-telegraph, electronics, computing, and 21st century information technology.

While it was my specific intention to produce a series of four food communication related blogs, which would embrace and represent the historical and cultural significance of the technologies and media objects presented within each of the eras, my endeavor to create an original perspective lead me down a deep-dive into a rabbit hole, which resulted in the formation of an entirely new website called, "Exploring Food Communications".

Pre-Telegraph Era



September 20, 2020

Exploring Food Communications Through My Family's Artifacts

By Christina Carambia

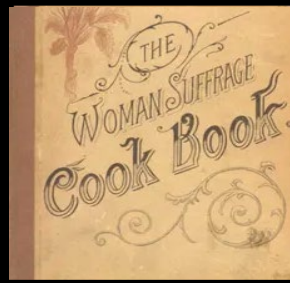
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The woman on the far right is my great grandmother, Mary Ellen, who moved to Kansas around 1871, via covered wagon on the Santa Fe Trail. Often, frontier ladies found themselves isolated in a new land, thousands of miles away from the only family they have ever known, with only cookbooks or recipe cards to look to for advice. The few cookbooks in print at the time were referred to as "Cooking Companions", and they contained household hints, like how to darn socks, and garden advice, like how to compost, as well as handwritten notes in the margins from previous owners. These recipe cards, manuscripts, and cookbooks would be the only constant communications from relatives, besides traditional letters.

- Original Title: Exploring Pre-telegraphic, Food Communications through an Examination of My Family's Oral Stories, Written Documents, and Photographic Heirlooms to Create a Better Understanding of How These Artifacts Maintain Cultural Significance and Continue to Foster an Exchange of Food Knowledge Throughout Generations.
- While the entire semester's work resulted in the creation and development of a new website, titled "Exploring Food Communications", this project focused on creating my first blog based on Module 2: Oral or the pre-telegraphic era, as well as setting up the website, which I have never done for an academic exercise.
- Material covered included an exploration of my family's artifacts, as well as other supportive and reliable sources, pertaining to early oral and written recipes, as media objects which represented an exchange of knowledge, a social obligation to network, and a cultural trend passed down through generations.
- The purpose of writing blogs was to improve my ability to deliver effective messages through the design of the information presented in the blogs, while focusing on presenting the integration of knowledge gained from this course, which concentrated on information technology's advancement throughout four eras, my concentration on food studies, and my own personal perspective.
- During my research, I concluded that, according to the use and gratification theory, recipes allow for the delivery of messages through an exchange of information, personal growth, connection with the past and, sometimes, the creation of a whole new recipe, which could become an heirloom recipe.
- On a personal note, I feel like it truly is my social obligation to pass these precious bits of family history on to the next generation of family foodies or cooks. My personal connection to these documents compels me to look for a deeper meaning in them, including the style of writing and the time period it was recorded in, which are all important clues to how society communicated about food during that time.

Electronic Era



October 11, 2020

Exploring Food Communications through the Suffragette Movement

By Christina Carambia

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- Original Title: Exploring Food Communications through the Lens of the Suffragette Movement to Create a Better Understanding of how the History of the Interconnectedness of the Invention of Telegraphy, Women's Rights, and Food Significantly Transformed American Society.
- While the entire semester's work resulted in the creation and development of a new website, titled "Exploring Food Communications", this project focused on creating my second blog based on Module 3: The Electronic era, which spurred my research goals towards attempting to connect the invention of the telegraph with food communication related topics. My research pointed to a connection between the jobs provided to women by the invention of the telegraph, women's desire to vote, and the cookbooks produced by the Suffragette Movement.
- Material covered included an exploration of the invention of the telegraph and food communications through the development of suffragist cookbooks, as media objects which represented an exchange of knowledge, a social obligation to network, and a cultural phenomena, which effectively won the right to vote for women across America.
- The purpose of writing blogs was to improve my ability to deliver effective messages through the design of the information presented in the blogs, while focusing on presenting the integration of knowledge gained from this course, which concentrated on information technology's advancement throughout four eras, my concentration on food studies, and my own personal perspective.
- During my research, I concluded that, according to Marshall McLuhan's perspective, that both the telegraph and the Suffragette cookbooks were the "medium" employed to deliver the "message", as unintended as the message may have seemed at the time. While the telegraph was literally used to deliver messages, it also signaled a message to women, who worked in the industry, that their rights were not on equal standing with men's rights, as demonstrated by the lower wages and longer hours that women were expected to accept. The cookbooks literally delivered instructions on how to cook meals, however, they also included Suffragette perspectives and provided financial support to the cause of winning the vote for women.
- On a personal note, I feel like food, while not a technology, could also be a medium through which a message was delivered. The three-way juxtaposition between food being used as a way to raise money through cookbook sales, food being used in hunger strikes, and food being used to force feed suffragists on hunger strikes remains, to me, a research worthy topic, which has captured my interest.

Food communications during the suffragist movement occurred in two very different ways: raising money and awareness through cookbooks and protesting through hunger strikes, which resulted in force feeding. While the suffragist movement was initiated to fight for women's voting rights, those rights may not have become so desirable, necessary, and apparent, if it weren't for the "message" of inequality in the workforce delivered by the invention of the telegraph, which encouraged women to leave the home and find employment in the new industry.

Computing Era



October 20, 2020

Exploring Food Communications in America's Early Computer Age.

By Christina Carambia

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Early computing changed growing methods, record keeping, and consumption. The tools we used to get and share our information about food drastically changed from things as basic as writing it down to inputting information into a home personal computer. As a person born in 1970, I saw some of these transformations happen seemingly overnight, as farmers and home gardeners abruptly had access to computerized tools and record keeping methods, grocery stores suddenly had magical scanning systems to check you out, and consumers had mind-blowing access the World Wide Web as a tool to research their food.

- Original Title: Exploring Food Communications through an Examination of Early Computing in America to Develop a Better Understanding of How Growing Food, Selling Food, and Buying Food Transformed from the Days of Pre-Computing to the Web 1.0 Era
- While the entire semester's work resulted in the creation and development of a new website, titled "Exploring Food Communications", this project focused on creating my third blog based on Module 4: The Computing Era (Pre-Computing to Web 1.0), as it relates to growing, selling and buying food.
- Material covered included an examination of how early computing technology, home personal computers, the invention of UPC codes, and the rise of 1.0 food-related websites effected the way agriculture, home gardeners, and consumers exchanged, accessed, consumed, and utilized information. Pulling all of these perspectives into one cohesive, short blog was impossible, and I failed to keep within the advised blog length, but the lesson learned was that I should have split the content into two blogs, as opposed to what I submitted and posted.
- The purpose of writing blogs was to improve my ability to deliver effective messages through the design of the information presented in the blogs, while focusing on presenting the integration of knowledge gained from this course, which concentrated on information technology's advancement throughout four eras, my concentration on food studies, and my own personal perspective.
- During my research, I concluded that, food communications made possible by the early computer era in America has allowed us, as a society, to create successful farms, build profitable businesses, and develop a network of food knowledge for all people to delve into and learn from, in order to become savvy shoppers, healthier individuals, better cooks, and confident home gardeners. Web 1.0 was just the beginning of our adventure in advanced food.
- On a personal note, revisiting my own experiences with my first PC , which I used to organize my farm business, was beneficial to developing my "story", which is an integral part of a business plan and strategy. I also believe that this era represents unbridled creativity, uncensored (self or otherwise) sharing of knowledge, and a model of true networking, which could provide valuable insights and possible goals for the future of food communication.

21st Century Information Technology

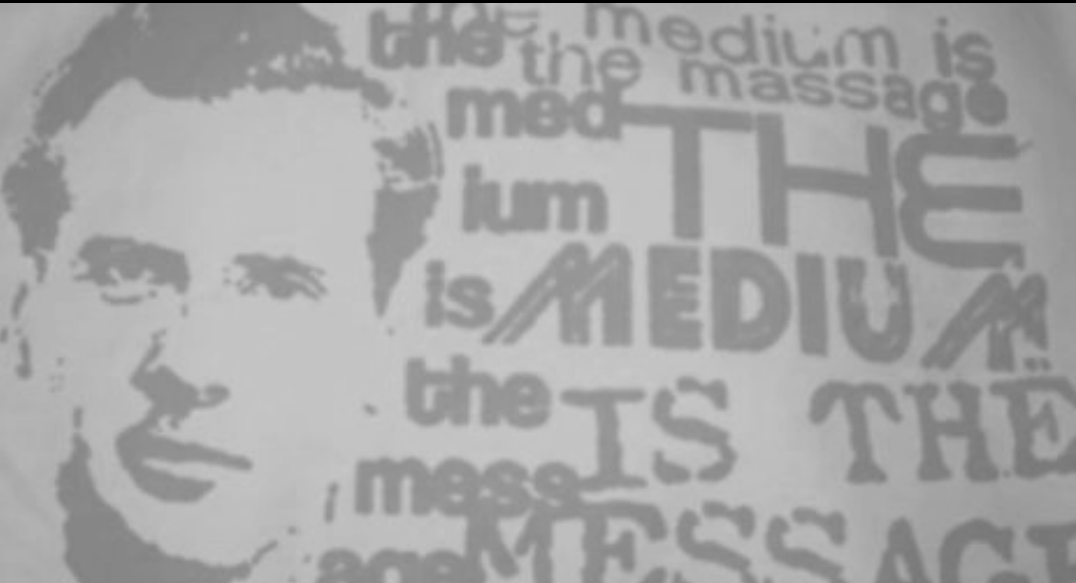


November 22, 2020

Exploring Food Communications: My Farm & 21st Century Business

By Christina Carambia

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McLuhan's phrase, "The medium is the message", means that the way we send and receive messages or communications is more important than the message itself because "the message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs" (McLuhan p.1).

"We're the medium at this point. We are the medium of our technologies. We don't use algorithms, algorithms use us. (MLTalks with Douglass Rushkoff, 10:25)." "Social media is about using our data to predict our future behavior, or, when necessary, to influence our future behavior, so that we act more in accordance with our statistical profiles. The digital economy...does it like people? No. If you have a business plan, what are you supposed to do? Get rid of all the people. Human beings... they want health care. They want money. They want meaning. You can't scale with people" (How to be "Team Human" in the Digital Future ,3:36).

- Original Title: Exploring Food Communications through My Struggle to Create a New Kind of Small, Local, Farm Business Model Amidst a Culture Obsessed with 21st Century Technologies.
- While the entire semester's work resulted in the creation and development of a new website, titled "Exploring Food Communications", this project focused on creating my third blog based on Module 5: 21st Century Information Technology, as it relates to my farm and 21st Century business models.
- Material covered included my vision for my farm business, Underground Greens, which is "To Develop a Farm Model which Creates a Sustainable Source of Produce & Knowledge to Solve Local Food Scarcity". My struggle is selling my vision to our current business culture, which is obsessed with 21st century technologies, and it includes venture capitalists, academic professionals who specialize in business, and local & state community leaders, which I've attempted to do by utilizing the New York State Business Competition and various other platforms. I explored food communications within the farm industry through a combination of perspectives from Marshall McLuhan, Douglas Rushkoff and my own, which has been gained through 25 years of experience & research, in an attempt to better understand why my idea for a new farm model has been so thoroughly rejected.
- The purpose of writing blogs was to improve my ability to deliver effective messages through the design of the information presented in the blogs, while focusing on presenting the integration of knowledge gained from this course, which concentrated on information technology's advancement throughout four eras, my concentration on food studies, and my own personal perspective.
- During my research, I concluded that creating a farm model, which places people and planet before profit, will lead to a more sustainable, local food system. While the media may be the message, I have defiantly joined "Team Human". I don't care if I ever scale up or make a million dollars, and I don't believe we need to scale out humanity to make a feed people in our local community.

Common Theme

Society Changed and Adapted Food Communications throughout the Eras of Technological Advancements to Better Suit Immediate Needs.



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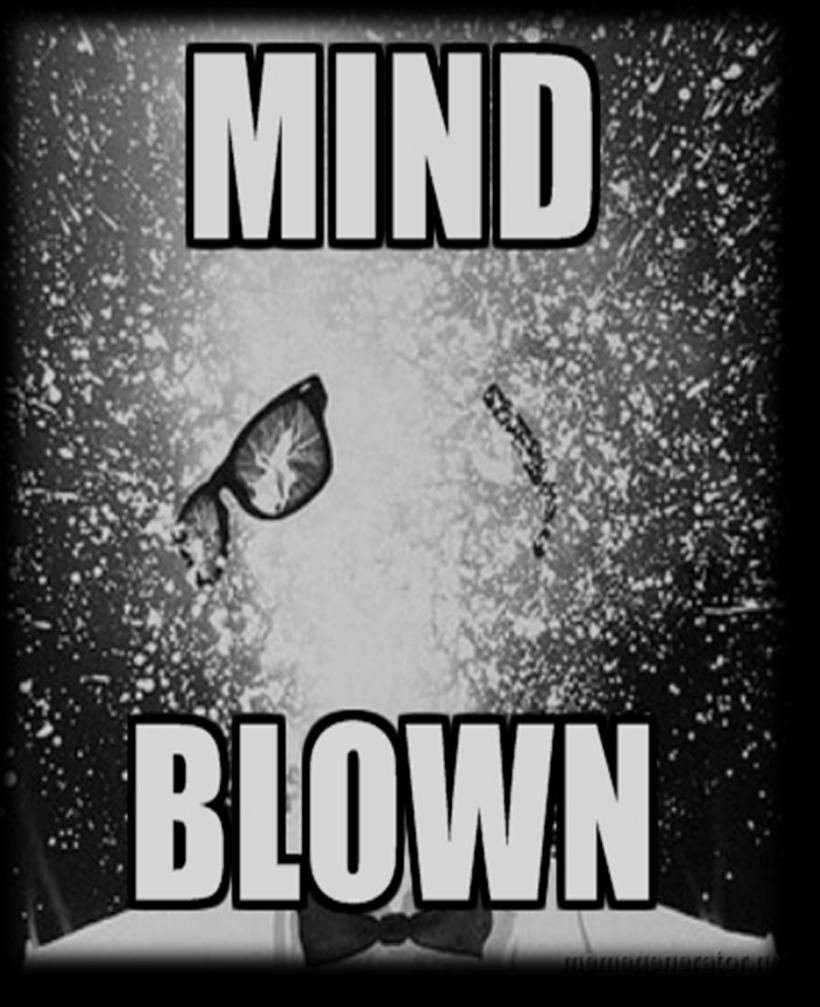
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- The Interconnectedness of food communications and technological advancements is apparent when one examines the messages delivered by stakeholders during each of the eras.
- Examples of the stakeholders include women in the pre-telegraphic era; the suffragists in the electronic era; farmers, gardeners, consumers and retailers in the computer era; and myself in the 21st century information technology age.
- Throughout the course, I embraced and focused on Marshall McLuhan's perspective of "the medium is the message", along with the integration of other supplemental sources and my own perspective, in an attempt to provide examples of how all of the stakeholders changed and adapted the media and technology to deliver food communication messages to better suit their immediate needs and fulfill their purpose.
- The stakeholder's purposes were often driven by the need to better themselves in some way, socially or financially, by creating powerful messages and delivering those messages through a network.

Assessing My Progress

My Goal was to Create an Original Perspective by Exploring Food Communications through the Historical Eras of Technological Advancements to Advance My Businesses, Underground Greens, but the Research Led Me Bigger Discoveries.



- My goal was to create an original perspective by exploring food communications through the historical eras of technological advancements to advance my businesses, Underground Greens, but the research led me to bigger discoveries, for example the concept of food communications as a stand-alone topic.
- Even with all of the provided course material, which was excellent, I struggled to make legitimate connections between food and the various technological eras. Each blog was a challenge, but it was that very challenge that allowed me to really see those connections for the first time in a very clear way, which helped my blog design skills tremendously.
- For example, Rushkoff talks about 21st century venture capitalists demanding scale, when that business model really only works for specific business goals, like eliminating as many employees as possible. This is definitely a silicon valley construct. I never truly understood why VCs were constantly demanding me to figure out ways to scale up, when part of my vision is to provide jobs. I completely understand it now, and I finally have an answer for those VCs.
- Working through each era's unfamiliar topics and struggling to find connections with my own work in the food industry helped me to develop better research and blog writing skills, which will continue to benefit me in any future information design courses and my own work at Underground Greens.
- The research skills I developed and insights I gained throughout this course are truly mind-blowing, and I will be integrating these new-to-me theories in all of my future work.