in the culture of communication

a map to orient ourselves
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IN THE CULTURE OF COMMUNICATION

A Map to Orient Ourselves

Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians – Rome
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5
INTRODUCTION

This fifth issue of the Gong series is the fruit of the reflection of the International Commission of Communication, formed by FMA and lay experts in the field of Social Communications, as was projected in the General Council Program (3, 4 d). It was instituted to launch a long term process aimed at the study, research, and proposal of orientations and concrete journeys regarding the culture of communication in an educative vision and in dialogue with the various sectors.

The text proposes to promote a process of reflection, of study, and of concrete choices for the elaboration of competent and responsible responses in the educative field. It aims to give strength and vigor to the commitment to Gospel proclamation in a world characterized by rapid change, digital information, and plurality of memberships and of platforms for the production of cultural messages.

It is the expression of a dialogued research in the course of the Inter-Sector meetings at the continental level with the coordinators of Social Communications of all the Provinces. They offered their contribution of ideas and proposals to be translated into practices and actions in the Educating Communities.

The Objective of Gong 5 is to weave a conversation on the communication culture in an educative vision for the entire Institute, creating awareness of the impact of contemporary scenarios on our identity and educative mission.

1 The Commission (March 2010) is composed of Sr. Giuseppina Teruggi, Sr. Julia Arciniegas, Sr. Anna Rita Cristaino, Sr. Lucy Roces
The history of the Institute teaches us that communication is a typical dimension of the Salesian charism. In Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello we already discover a strong and emphasized need for communication and a rare ability to establish authentic relationships.

In the course of our history, epochal changes have required continuous reflection to find the communication modalities most adapted to the times in order to give adequate responses to the real needs of the young.

The most recent documents of the Institute witness to the evolution of the concept of communication that has arrived at a conception that is broader and transversal (Cf. Plan of Formation, Guidelines for the Educational Mission of the FMA, Cooperation for Development). Already in line with the Sector of Social Communication, (Cf. GONG series), communication is not perceived from an instrumental point of view alone. Emphasis is placed on the style of rapports and connections that favor educative action in the complex weaving of communication-education-evangelization.

The Church as well has seen the evolution in the way of conceiving communication, above all in the face of the emergence of the means of social communication. From an instrumental vision of the media, now the discourse is centered on the person who communicates, on the communicative dimension of all ecclesial life, on evangelization as communication, on the culture in which we live marked by the media, on the communicative capacity of pastoral workers, on the style of communication inside and outside the Church.2

(Sc Sector); Sr. Leontine Sonyi Ithweva (AFC); Sr. Alice Albertine Nhamposse (MOZ); Sr. Tonny Aldana (CBC); Sr. Maria Helena Moreira (BBH); Sr. Debbie Ponsaran (FIL); Sr. Maria Antonia Chinello (RMA); Sr. Marie Kučerová (CEL); Sr. Anna Mariani (IRO); Sr. Ausília de Siena (IMR); Professor Roberta Gisotti; Professor Massimiliano Padula.

Church documents therefore evidence a significant journey especially in the 20th century. These are not to be considered conclusive but rather points of departure for further journeys of dialogue between the Church and the contemporary world.  

We are aware that we are immersed in a communication culture with new paradigms, changing scenarios, new forms of language, and different modes of narration. We ask ourselves, what formative implications are there for the FMA in the Educating Communities?

We do not pretend to offer a response to the great “whys” of contemporary phenomena. Reasoning, reflecting, and studying together have allowed us to begin with broad questions, to give voice to interrogatives regarding the horizon of the young, and that flow from our educative passion.

1. What aspects are emerging from the communication culture?
2. How do they seem to question our identity as Salesian educators and our educative reality?
3. What journeys are we activating and what others can we foresee in order to be an active presence in the communication culture?
4. What Educommunication processes are we implementing and seem feasible?

The text is articulated in various parts.

In the first part, “At the Crossroads of Change - Contemporary Scenarios,” which is deliberately broader, the lines of basic trends in today’s culture of communication and the anthropological challenges are taken into consideration.

In the second part, there are some questions that touch

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closely on our identity, relationships, formation, and style of community life and mission. Each nucleus is integrated with questions that challenge us and help us to understand and evaluate the reality and context in which we live and work.

The third part offers some indications for formulating a Communication Plan as a process of elaboration inserted in other processes and viewed as a point of connection among the specific attentions of the various Sectors.

Our aim is to reach every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians insofar as she is a Salesian educator. The mediation of the coordinators of Social Communications is important so that this proposal may be assumed and concretized in every Educating Community.
1. AT THE CROSSROADS OF CHANGE
CONTEMPORARY SCENARIOS

Numerous definitions and metaphors have been used to
describe contemporary society: information and communi-
cations society, post-modern society, society at risk, liquid
society. Today we decide how the world of 2050 will be and
we prepare for what it will be in 2100. The future is before
us and in some way, we not only prepare for it, we live in it.
Today, markets seem to control the fate of the planet, appro-
priating to themselves both history and histories.

Is it possible to change direction? Or is destiny decided
by the tyranny and power of finance? According to Jacques
Attali it will be possible to hand on to future generations a
safer world if the potential of the market and technology are
joined and re-invented with gratuity, freedom, personal and
social responsibility, giving birth to new ways of living and
creating together.

For educators immersed in the culture of communica-
tion, an educative task stimulates us and works toward the
formation of women and men of tomorrow and of today, in
a vision of social inclusion and transformation. Let us look
at our world. The intention is to furnish keys to interpret
the present and offer opportunities of comparison and re-
flection so that we will not stop researching and questioning
about the person and about the young.

1.1 In the Communication Culture

The communication culture is a fact. We perceive this
reality with increasing awareness when we converse with
the little ones of the primary school and the young people
of the youth centers, with parents and lay collaborators with
whom we share the educative mission day after day.
But what does this term mean? The expression needs to be considered in its totality and not as a simple group of technologies that are the product of the mass culture and the digital culture but rather, its co-existence with the reality of interpersonal communication.

Life is marked by communication. It is the experience of every day. “Communication is one of those human activities that everyone recognizes but few can define satisfactorily. Communication is talking to one another, it is television, it is spreading information, it is our hair style, and it is literary criticism: the list is endless.”

“Communication” is an “umbrella term,” a single word with many meanings and social practices. It is the space and occasion for interpersonal encounters that are realized completely in dialogue. It is information, exchange of experiences, and sharing knowledge and learning. It is culture in the way of being and presenting oneself, and of cultural tradition that is transmitted and handed down. It is the media in all its old and new forms, from print to film, from television to multimedia, from the Internet to its spaces of socializations. It is a uniting theme, a category that interprets the complexity of our times. It is an idea that configures a society – that of communication where all is resolved in the exchange of information, the result of a system of relationships. The spreading presence, technological innovation, diffusive crossing of media products, variegated opportunities for channels and programs of distribution, of consummation and fruition connote today’s culture. “Culture of communication” means referring to a way of behaving, of being in the world, of a sector of life, an existential context.

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Digital Convergence

We have arrived at this through a process called “digital convergence.” New technologies have not substituted the dear old mass media of print, film, radio, and television. They have integrated, blended, and enabled them. In fact, how many films are distributed on the Web and seen on YouTube? How much music is listened to and downloaded in a more or less legal way? How many web radio and web TV become integral parts of the day of the young, and of many adults who open windows on the social network or chat on MSN right from their PCs at work? How much information passes through uninterrupted online updates or shared on Twitter or on a blog?

Convergence means the possibility of access to any content everywhere, at anytime, through whatever device. The pervasiveness of this phenomenon has greatly soared, so much so that it is taken for granted that it exists and is intrinsic to the “evolution of technology.” The mass media is by now the fruition between paper and digital, portable on iPad and Smartphone, through rapid and continuous connections, always on, available with Bluetooth and Wi-Fi, and not only this. Included in the process of convergence to the digital are all the cultural aspects of today and yesterday. An example is the collecting, preserving, and distributing of individual and social memory made available even online.

The confines between content and vehicle disappear more and more. Already McLuhan in 1964, affirmed that “the medium is the message” and that the world is a “global village.”

The communication culture concerns the organization of communication as well. The devices are portable and al-

most invisible, easy to use, available to everyone, everywhere, and in any manner. The cell phone is an expression of a true and proper cultural change. The need to be connected always, satisfied by wireless technology, is an indicator of the need of every person to communicate. The miniaturization of technological devices that are increasingly more intelligent and smaller fulfills instead the need of personal communication that is ever on hand. Thus we see a passage in the communication model from “one-to-one” to the mass media of “one-to-many” and of “many-to-many” of the new technologies. The new media are also called “my media” because they translate a communication of the type “one-to-one always available” and “everyone always accessible.” In this optic, it is necessary for persons, groups, organizations to continuously adapt to the rapidity and the increasing innovations, whether of devices, or above all, of how to use them. It is an obligatory journey in order to confront the fragmentation of ideologies and values that impacts the tastes and the life style of social and cultural contexts.

The culture in which we are immersed confirms that communication is a fundamental good, a right, but also a duty that we cannot renounce. The “new” culture demands a committed formation that sustains a huge change of mentality. We must educate ourselves responsibly so as to be aware of the potential and the risk of the media.

John Paul II in his instruction “Starting Afresh from Christ” (2002) wrote of the need to promote within the educative sector a “renewed cultural commitment” in order to keep pace with a reality in continual evolution. We need to modulate our thinking and acting to the languages and styles of communication in order to make the evangelical message visible, to provide quality communication with the old and new media, to form mature persons who are critical and creative, capable of discovering, reading, and interpreting the “seeds of the Word” in contemporary culture.

The communication culture is not without ambiguity. It
is a variegated scene within the different social contexts. It has points of evidence and expression, of influence and diverse diffusion that configures itself around two realities, mutation and the web paradigm.

**Mutation**

John Paul II stressed the “rapid development” of present society. The velocity of innovation and the complexity in which we live today can generate disorientation, confusion, and uncertainty. Change is a permanent fact. As a social being, the person has always intervened, transformed, adapted, and shaped the context.

We have already anticipated that from a technological point of view, we cannot proceed by substitution but rather by integration between the old and new media. The result is the configuration of an integrated system of communication and the amplification of offers and opportunities of channels and messages that create and diffuse culture. In this new context, the concepts of space and time are modified and their boundaries are becoming thinner to the point of disappearing altogether.

**Cross-media**

This is the possibility that, through new technologies, the contents of a communication are distributed on different technological platforms, using different formats: in entertainment programs, in advertisements, in video and audio production, and in the construction of websites. What is interesting is the inter-dependence and the “send backs” that are established and organized among the various media: television, cell phone, Internet. In fact, cross-media approach requires, having available ever growing and updated digital resources to use as the basis for the intelligent planning of the entire communicative process.

For example, a story may be introduced in a film, de-
developed by a television series, diffused by topical and interest magazines either on paper or online, and distributed as a gadget in newsstands. Access to these products is autonomous, but every product is a “point” of the process that resolves well-defined requisites for reaching an objective. In this way, diverse media sustain variegated experiences that motivate consumption and attract users.

Digital Divide

This term indicates inequality in the distribution of access and use of the new information and communication technologies both in industrialized nations and in developing countries and within the same industrialized countries among the various levels of the population.

It deals with a complex theme because it touches the various sphere of social, cultural, economic, and political life. The causes of this digital diversity are multiple, aggravated today by accelerated change that widens the distance more and more between the haves and the have nots, those with access and those without, those who get richer and those who get poorer. This disproportion goes with and adds to the numerous differences that touch many areas of the planet: poverty, lack of electricity, low levels of education, and situations of economic and social degradation. Another perspective from which to consider the digital divide is the disparity of access to opportunities offered by the Web such as information, knowledge, awareness, sociability, relationships, and entertainment. The world does not seem to be equally divided between info-rich and info-poor. The knowledge divide is therefore deeper. It is urgent that it be filled, creating among other things, opportunities such as schools, teacher formation, and didactic resources in order to access all knowledge and learning. This is also important for the memory and wisdom of peoples and cultures present on the Web as well.
The Web Paradigm

Internet is called the “Web of webs” and it is without doubt one of the metaphors that can be used to read the present insofar as its rapidity, immediateness, interconnectivity, openness, and circularity that characterize society as well. The advent of the World Wide Web, or WWW or simply “web,” in that which is defined “1.0”, is essentially informative in articulation and navigation. Now there is “web 2.0” with its load of sharing and relationships, its “added value” that has favored involvement, protagonism, participation, and interaction. Soon the World Wide Web will be “web 3.0” or the semantic web that aims at insuring a more “intelligent” research on meaning more than on terms with which the search engines operate.

Notwithstanding substantial and structural disparity, the diffusion of the Internet concerns the entire human community of every continent. The fruition and consummation of web resources involves men and women of all ages, although for different uses.

The Web should not be regarded merely as “one” more technology available for use. Rather it is an anthropological place to be inhabited. In fact, it is a way of existing, the background, the permanent channel of connection, the practice and process, the modality and instruments for self-expression and confirming the right/duty of every person to communicate and grow in relationship.

6 Internet and World Wide Web in current language are used interchangeably but the two terms are actually different. Internet is the technology that connects the computer to the network, while the World Wide Web (WWW) is the hypertext that allows navigation and reference of the contents deposited on the servers of the whole planet through a browser. Therefore, the Web is within the Internet and needs this infrastructure.

The concept of a “networked society”\(^8\) explains that interaction has primacy over the content that people may interchange. Today, more importance is given to being connected than to sharing thoughts, opinions, or reflections. Some traits that better define the “networked society” are:

– The logic of the Web is the complex plot that connects not only systems, but also persons and relationships that are reciprocally intertwined.

– The flexibility of the Web highlights change, transformation, and fluidity in the social tapestry that concerns organizations and institutions, and also the life of persons who today no longer have definitive points of reference. What is gained today is already up for discussion tomorrow.

– *The* convergence of the digital technologies designs an integrated system of channels of communication and products of the media culture.

The Web paradigm also modifies the concept of organization where flexibility and circularity seem to substitute order and hierarchy. It passes from the vertical to the horizontal. It focuses on the process more than on the task. It privileges team work and tends to measure the level of quality and satisfaction of the final user. It favors processes of formation and re-qualification of the person.

The Web paradigm is characterized by:

– The continuity of experience between “inside” and “outside” the web, between “online” and “offline” that surpasses the contrast between what is real and what is virtual. The boundaries between inside/outside is thin, but it is important to clarify, above all in reference to the life of the young, that which is “public” and that which instead is “private”.

– Ever easier to use devices that put user generated content at the center and becomes the producer of communication and not only the user. He/she has the freedom to navigate, intervene, participate, publish, communicate, copy, paste, and cut the content at pleasure.

– The accessibility and easy use of content - In Web 2.0, it is almost a game for young people to publish photos, texts, films, audio that are tagged so that they can be easily accessed both by other users, and above all, by search engines. Thus, the Web is the privileged place for gathering and narrating intertwined stories in which one feels to be at the center and not only a more or less active user.

– There are collaborative and cooperative forms of writing and sharing, where all the subjects participate in the process of content elaboration as managers and “modifiers” of knowledge. An example of this is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, and digital/online write-ups.

– New expressions of democracy and citizenship relate contents, sectors, memberships, institutions. This is the case in some social movements that have recently emerged in both western and eastern countries. It deals with movements born among the common people. For this reason they are called “from below” that activate journeys of giving and receiving ideas, contents, proposals, and protests “from the road to the web,” and vice versa. In the social network one can denounce, share, call for meetings and fix places, dates, and times in which to gather for rallies, raise voices, and dialogue. After the events, the pages of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are crowded with comments, photos, and videos. It is a way of “voicing”, offering one’s contribution, making the masses aware of social, political, and religious happenings both at the local and international levels.
1.2 The Anthropological Challenge

The mutation is not only technical, cultural, social, and economic. It is above all, anthropological and calls into play the dimensions of the person’s identity, relationship, and expression.

Mark Prensky defined the young born between the nineties and the year two thousand as “digital natives”. From birth, they are exposed to visual culture and images. They have learned to co-exist with multiple screens such as television, computer, play station, cell phone, etc. He writes, “Today’s students have not just changed incrementally from those of the past, nor simply changed their slang, clothes, body adornments, or styles, as has happened between generations previously. A really big discontinuity has taken place. One might even call it a “singularity” – an event which changes things so fundamentally that there is absolutely no going back. This so-called “singularity” is the arrival and rapid dissemination of digital technology in the last decades of the 20th century.”

According to some studies, the brain of the new generations undergoes an alteration in the neural connections that modifies and transforms the traditional generational differences into something new, a chasm that scientists call brain gap. In children who have a precocious interaction with television and computer, the cerebral connections develop differently in respect to those who exercise reading or writing or another physical activity. Especially today, two generations come in contact, which, because of different cognitive experiences, have different cerebral structures and therefore have difficulty dialoguing. According to Prensky, the social tapestry seems to split into two large cultural

groups, the “digital natives” and the “digital immigrants,” the adults who have been unwillingly projected and forced to live in the world of digital technology.

Young people go from a logical-rational thought to an intuitive thought. For them, learning does not simply mean receiving information but rather experiencing, testing, transforming, reconfiguring, judging, interchanging, and making keener sensibilities and cognitive processes. Their point of departure is the image. They are used to place experiences in common, to have direct confrontation, to give advice, and to dialogue simultaneously. Their day runs from one keyboard to another, involved in an activity called “multi-tasking,” which is the capacity to manage and keep up with many activities at the same time, using various channels of communication. Contemporaneously, they study, chat, listen to the radio, download music, update their Facebook and Twitter profiles, watch television online, manage texting and cell phones.

The anthropological change touches the need for relationships as well because the person is and remains a creature of communication and interchange. Online friends multiply and web ties create a space in which to “be together.” But at the same time, relationships seem to weaken, to become ever more distant from the strong traditional rapport of one time, like those of the family. Using an image, we can say that we broaden more and more, amplifying the horizontal level at the cost of depth and intensity in relationships and in the quality of communication.

**Digital Inhabitants**

Being with the young, accompanying them, and educating them today calls for noteworthy knowledge and understanding of their languages, and of their forms of expression. One perspective from which to understand the new generation is precisely the communication exchanges they form among themselves and with others. They move
through the various cultures and geography of the Web. They enter into rapport with other languages and other cultures. They structure true and proper digital planetary spaces.

As they socialize and experience vast relational dynamisms, they try to build an identity that concretizes one way or another, in considering their rapport with themselves, with others, with reality, and with the transcendent. They are “multi-located” in varied spaces and times, always more “externalized,” and constantly oriented outside themselves.

In the new forms of self-expression, where image, style, musical genres, and art have spaces, hidden between the lines of social network comments is the search for meaning, for belonging, for dialogue, for relationship. In transitioning between the local and global dimension, in moving from real and virtual reality that are often fused, adolescents and young adults imprint new meanings on what is real and virtual, lived and communicated, constructed and learned. Mario Morcellini affirms that “The spark of communication technology seems to provide context, vocabulary, and expression for a networked generation, which has found in the means of communication one of the most important territories for recognizing identities and attributions of the meaning of reality.”

Entrance into the social network of the Web, the so-called online community, is extremely free, accessed by a simple click. Here multiple memberships can be cultivated and different identities experienced. The digital self is the opportunity of working one’s own identity and relationships within the ever changing spaces of the Web. This is favored by a permanent connection and the platforms that allow the

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11 Cf. Simona TIROCCHI - Romana ANDÒ - Marzia ANTENORE, Giovani a parole. Dalla generazione media alla networked generation (Young People to Word... From the media generation to the networked generation) Milano, Guerini & Associati 2002.
personalization and animation of content, indication of preferences, personal habits, and attitudes. The risk lies in the pluralisation of identities due to continuous evolution, experimentation, and adaptation to different virtual spaces where a “con-fusion” can also be verified between the public and private dimension.

“Nomadism” is a condition of digital inhabitants who “traverse” spaces built and recognized by tastes and interests, friendships, and free time. As age progresses, there is a “migration” from more crowded and public communities that are open and uncontrolled, to spaces where communication becomes more restricted, private, and friendly. The “transitional” dimension proper to web communication indicates the cultural instability and social changeableness that renders the person a kind of “traveller in a middle land,” and forces temporary choices to reach an ever more fragile equilibrium.

In fact, the Web can or risks being a continuous surface, without boundaries between within and without that restore an image of the world and the person seen and touched, who often is closed in a self-referenced circle where one sees nothing but oneself. It is important that the need for communication and relationship that is amplified by the Web and made possible at the horizontal level be cracked open so that a spiral may enter, opening it to transcendence, to the “more” that it cannot give. The voice and presence of Catholics on the “digital continent” can offer this humanizing contribution to “the numerous peoples of the Web” at this time (Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Social Communication, 2009). It is only in this way that not only connection, but also communion may be assured.

A Web to Learn

New digital technologies and the development of the Web can significantly better the learning experience of the persons who use it for their own formation. Recent learning
theories evidence the fundamental importance assumed by the social context in the learning process. According to social-cultural Constructivism, the subject who learns “constructs” his/her own competence by enriching it and re-structuring it in relation to knowledge and the points of view of other individuals. Thus, individual learning is the product of a group process. All that is learned is filtered by a process of interpretation conditioned by the context, by one’s own cultural baggage, and personal life. In this context, the diffusion and evolution of information technology and communication open new scenarios and possibilities of development in the didactic world. They permit automation, re-creation, or simulation through the support of the new media and use of the Web, some processes typical of traditional didactics, and the connection of individuals with an infinite amount of information and with a similar broad number of individuals with whom it is possible to interact and collaborate.

The use of new media in the formation process, founded on collaborative learning, that is, “on the mutual involvement of the participants in a coordinated effort to resolve a problem together or construct a platform of knowledge and exchange,” brings with itself different important implications. These implications are: emphasis on “learning by doing,” involvement of the student in collaborative research of knowledge, and a change in the role of the instructor, whether teacher or educator, who, from a holder of authority and knowledge, becomes a guide and a facilitator.

At the present moment, therefore, the Web represents an opportunity and a challenge for learning. Whoever knows how to accept this challenge will succeed in proposing, not only new and adequate contents for the times, but also an ever more effective way corresponding to new formative needs and to the modality of communication of the “digital generation.”

Didactic technology, due to its particular characteristic, can facilitate learning because it speaks the same language
of the student and offers the possibility of using different languages, different codes, speaking to all the “eight intelligences” that make up our intelligence (Gardner, Multiple Intelligences).\textsuperscript{12}

**Opportunities and Risks**

The rapport between young people and Web communication opens up to new and unheard of educational resources. The advent of the Web re-defines the space of the educative pact. It changes not only the way of “educating” but also changes the “profile” of the young person as he or she lives the adventure of becoming a man or a woman. Don Bosco taught us that “education is a matter of the heart” and must begin with what the young like, even if today this means the fatigue and the effort of learning about their world, entering it, overcoming the sense of bewilderment, and the fear of not being with the times.

For our youth who grew up with the Internet, the Web has furnished various opportunities:

– Protagonism in a “real” space of experiences diversely articulated and unified by practices and relationships.

– Relational individuality – the person does not become an absolute nor is absorbed by the group, but through relationships, builds his/her own identity through a measured management of his/her own imprint in relationship with others.

\textsuperscript{12} Howard Gardner in his book, “The Theory of Intelligences,” discovered the existence of eight different types of intelligences: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, musical, interpersonal, intra-personal, visual/spatial, corporeal/kinesthetic, and naturalistic. The new technologies are in perfect harmony with these multiple intelligences. In fact, they allow the management of study materials according to different points of view. Therefore, the new digital technologies are efficacious instruments to enable eventual lacks relative to one of the eight multiple intelligences.
– Inter-activity, because the Internet is not only a reservoir of information, but also a place of relationships. It is not only technology for knowledge but also a Web for communication.

– Responsibility and reciprocity because the Web sustains the capacity for openness toward others. Being connected, “associated,” overcomes the limits of space and time, becomes a condition for reinforcing the beauty of encounter, and prolongs the marvel and awe of interpersonal relationships.

– Personalization of education and learning that leads to valuing the personal contribution. The concept of collective intelligence sustains that on the Web there is “an intelligence distributed everywhere, continually valued, and coordinated in real time that leads to an effective mobilization of competencies.”13 It is not a sum of intelligences, but a “new” knowing. The Web enables meeting and dialogue with multiple approaches, the invention of research strategies and sharing. It develops new and diverse expressive abilities, and the acceptance of a plurality of ideas and solutions to problems.

– Redefinition of competencies and rapport in education – It opens new roads for re-projecting doing and being, of “building” together. It means self formation and continually questioning daily reality, not resolving problems definitively but ever ready to relocate to new areas of communication.

– The capacity to “remain with,” to share, to accompany each other both in passing moments and in daily life. It is in the interactive area of the Web that communi-

cation occurs, where the real give and take of social life happens. Studies confirm that mediated relationships are marked, among others things, by the dimension of gift and gratuity.

– The capacity to speak of oneself with confidence, thus building a space from the bottom up, in which the personal dimension is placed in common. The Web seems to have restored citizenship to the written word. The social network, and in particular blogs, is distinguished by narration, thoughts, and comments. It is an opportunity to reread and write “between and beyond the lines” history and stories, to live not only in the present, in an infinite here and now, but to be able to recount in order to open oneself to others in reciprocity.

The open dimension of the Web fascinates and involves. The rapidity of connection, the uninterrupted possibility of interaction, and the multiplication of relationships are core perspectives to launch journeys of education to authentic communication together, for the young and for us.

However, we must take into consideration some aspects that arouse questions, precisely because certain dynamics and developments, to which communication mediated by the computer will lead to, are not entirely clear:

– Forms of banality to avoid conflict or approval, where discordant positions with respect to those of the group are not expressed; refusal to “emerge” as a person inhibits personal responsibility and witness.

– Expressions of intimacy that pass through models that “aligned with” the group or are expressed prevalently in indirect and mediated ways.

– Prevalence of a purely casual communication, just to maintain contact. This impoverishes the exchange and renders impossible an encounter that goes beyond “being with.”
– Friendships that are built on *sameness and affinity* leaving out all that is “other” by age, authority, diverse histories and visions. The Web should not become a “den” of refuge but rather a “home” where openness to others is pedagogy for encounter and communication.

– Missing connection between the private and public dimension of communication inside and outside the Web. Life is an infinite flow of rings and connections and often there is no room for silence, reflection, critical thinking, or elaborating sorrows and joys.

– Enables the “bending” of technological devices to one’s aims, disregarding the ethical and functional implications of the instruments used.

Based on scientific research and historical facts of recent years, the conviction that the Internet is a new form of dependence has become ever more evident and alarming. Without doubt, the velocity, immediateness, economy, and anonymity typical of online communication can establish deviant ways in psychologically and socially fragile personalities. One can pass from “navigating” to “drowning” on the Web. Awareness of the risks and dangers one runs on the web, which generate dependence, can motivate the adoption of critical and responsible approaches that recognize the Internet as a potential to be understood, interpreted, and used correctly.

*Internet Addiction Disorder (IAD)* is the name that identifies the syndrome of Internet dependence that is as real as alcoholism. Like other pathologies of dependence, it provokes social problems, uncontrollable desires, withdrawal symptoms, isolation, economic and work difficulties. To avoid letting the Web be transformed into a trap, the totality of the young person must be watched. Education must converge on their individual, human, spiritual, and cultural potential in order to accompany them in their growth as persons. For adults, there must be an analysis of social, sci-
cientific, and technological change and an on-going formation that goes well beyond the classrooms and the walls of the family.

The person is born, grows, and lives in a context that is more and more “on the Web”. The challenge is to provide parameters so that they learn to navigate in its complexity and interconnectivity, mature a critical, thoughtful mentality capable of choosing, of denouncing, and of defending the value of a culture at the service of life. They must be enabled to accept themselves, to have positive encounters with others, (classes, peoples, cultures) and with God.

We are in a “time of passage,” to be lived without losing enthusiasm but rather gathering with full awareness the challenges facing us in order to transmit to those entrusted to us the courage and the joy inherent in an ongoing adventure. We need educators and communicators who witness to the interior elation and determination to face the open seas of transformation. They must first be adventurous women and men, humble and persevering explorers who know how to fix their gaze on solid ground while always looking ahead. They do not always have all the answers, but they know some practical and concrete secrets in order to live without too much fear and to continue to entrust themselves to the course that at night offers us only the North Star.

We must understand what the culture of communication is, study and clarify some of its more global phenomena, its resources, and its challenges to our charismatic identity.
2. QUESTIONS TO OUR CHARISMATIC IDENTITY

We FMA feel ourselves particularly questioned by the communication culture which asks us to revisit the style of formation and educative-evangelizing action to respond more efficaciously to contemporary challenges. We feel the urgency to actuate this renewal, but we do not find it easy to concretize it in coherent actions. We still find it hard to assume a new mentality that sees communication as the “ambient” in which we live and work.

The situation of rapid change in which we live questions our identity, relationships, formation, style of community life, and our educative-evangelizing mission.

2.1 Our Identity, Our Relationships

The new communication culture questions our identity as consecrated women today and our way of living the evangelical counsels. Aware of the value of the call and of the validity of the Salesian charismatic presence, we recognize the need to make courageous choices in order to live our vocational identity with “creative fidelity,” to experience a style of animation and management that is more participative, and to render our structures more flexible.

In today’s society, which Zygmunt Bauman calls “liquid,” we are called to “unlearn in order to learn.”

We ask ourselves:
2.2 Formation

Assuming formation as a lifelong itinerary helps us to respond better to contemporary challenges. Our communities are called to be places of continuous learning where life experiences are shared. It is necessary to find time for reflection and sharing in order to understand, in the logic of the Web, epochal changes, to revive the style of community life, and to create environments that are more positive and humanizing. It is fundamental to engage in a wise animation that knows how to discover and enable the resources present in every person and to create conditions so that “everyone would have a voice.” Ongoing formation is the space to act on the need to build new skills and to prepare us to become “women of communication,” capable of utilizing diverse channels and languages, of expressing closeness and empathy, of assuming an attitude of listening and of understanding, and of creating educommunicative ecosystems.

The elaboration of itineraries for initial formation must take into account that the young people in formation are already “born digital” and therefore it is necessary to build

- Are we aware that in our present culture a new model of consecrated life is emerging? What new priorities and organizational models emerge?
- Do the challenges of the communication culture stimulate us to assume new communication styles?
- In which situations do we experience a more participative animation and management?
- Does our Preventive System, lived in its communicative dimension, change our way of relating to our sisters, our collaborators, our young people, in our territory and in today’s reality?
processes that are adequate and coherent with the changes already going on.

It is important for every FMA to feel the need for a serious formation that is in harmony with the culture of communication, overcoming superficiality, negative dependence, and confusion. It is just as important that our communicative competencies evolve, otherwise we will no longer have anything to say because we will be lacking the ways of saying it.

We ask ourselves:

- Are our communities places of ongoing formation? In what way?
- As FMA, do we feel the urgency of formation within the communication culture?
- The young people in formation were born in the new communication culture. How do we keep this in mind? How do we make them protagonists in their formative process? What communicative style do we assume with them?
- Do we know the expectations of the young in regard to religious life? How do our formative proposals consider these?

2.3 Style of Community Life

In the Web society where there is perennial interconnectedness, are we aware of the need to rediscover the taste for dialogue and gratuitous sharing of self, and of the typically Salesian family spirit? We face changes with optimism and planning in a faith vision. It is important to enable ourselves to an attitude of continual study and discernment in order to live and realize our mission significantly and efficaciously. We move within a web and we
live the interdependence of events that call for global interventions that are to be interpreted and faced together.

Thus there is need for a style of animation that makes everyone a protagonist for the community climate and for education to a responsible management of time. Time is rapid and fleeting. Sometimes we risk pursuing the multiple possibilities that are offered or the many things that pressure us, without adequate reflection. The world of the media also pressures and envelops us and we are not immune to it. The challenge is still and always, a formative one, not only in the sense of educating ourselves about the media. Above all, we are challenged to form ourselves to the responsible use of time in our life so as not to take away space from relationships, community encounters, prayer, discernment, reflection, study, and work. All these are the basis for realizing our “living and working together” in a significant way.

We ask ourselves:

- Do our communities interact with the surrounding area to put information, ideas, and values in circulation? How do they do this?
- What are our lifestyles? What do they communicate?
- Do we feel responsible for the organization of community and personal time? How do we manage them?
- Which strategies do we use to overcome a fragmented and compartmentalized mentality?
- Do we believe and practice synergy with the groups of the Salesian Family and other Institutions?
2.4 Our Educative-Evangelizing Mission

The communication culture is the new areopagus of the mission. The change and complexity orient every FMA toward new missionary enterprises. We are in a new continent for exploration, and, like the first missionaries, in facing and crossing it we can identify unheard of opportunities to meet young people and accomplish the educative mission with them. Our task is to be a mediation that offers instruments of interpretation and renewed meaning, with a balance between easy-going enthusiasms and rigid closures. As FMA therefore, we feel the urgency to be ever more aware of being “immersed” in the communication culture, to become impassioned again for the common educative mission and to choose to “remain” with the young.

It is necessary to rethink pastoral action keeping in mind the anthropological challenge if we do not want to put at risk the very education of children, adolescents, and young people. Many educators live “the temptation to renounce, to fail to understand their role or the mission entrusted to them” (Benedict XVI, Letter of the Holy Father Benedict XVI to the Dioceses and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Education, 2008). In fact, it speaks of the “educational emergency”. The Salesian charism offers us a clear awareness of the urgency of educating in the new cultural context. This calls for re-reading educative-evangelizing action from a communication perspective and rethinking the places for pastoral animation. Educative environments are also the “social media,” inhabited by the young in a particular way. They are vital spaces that modify and influence the attitudes and models of relationship.

We are called to rediscover our responsibility in regard to the young, to inhabit the places they frequent, to be in tune with their languages, to be open to change, and to be more competent in the relationship of accompaniment.

Assuming an attitude of deep listening is already com-
munication and, above all, harmonizing our daily life with the proposal announced by Jesus Christ as the great gift that we can offer the new generations.

We ask ourselves:

- Do we perceive communication as a mission field?
- What fears impede our active entrance into the communication culture?
- What contributions are we giving to education/evangelization in order to be relevant in the context in which we live?
- Do we know youth culture, their languages, and their life styles? What educative practices do we utilize?
- Is evangelization re-formulated, keeping in mind the communication perspective?
- How do the various sectors of animation take into account the communication culture? How do they see their place within this culture?
3. A MAP TO ORIENT OURSELVES TOWARD A COMMUNICATION PLAN

After focusing on the aspects emerging from the communication culture and the interrogatives for the educative mission, we feel that it is important to offer some indications for a Communication Plan. It is to be understood as a process to be inserted in others already launched in the whole Institute and presented as a point of connection among the specific concerns of the various Sectors.

Our vision is that of coordination for communion where we proceed with coordinated and convergent processes at the service of the mission of a Province or an individual community.

By Communication Plan we mean an instrument of planning, programming, and management where the communicative and educative instances converge and can help the Educating Community realize the mission in the diverse Provinces and local realities.

In order to draft a Communication Plan at various levels, some precise steps are necessary. It is important to delineate how the Institute situates itself in the historic time in which we are living.

A useful instrument to this end is the so-called SWOT Analysis\textsuperscript{14} that permits the concrete articulation of the strong points, the weaknesses, the opportunities, and the threats to an institution. From the study of the situation emerge Objectives, explanation of the processes to actuate in order to promote journeys pertinent to making us grow in the awareness of being immersed in a communication

\textsuperscript{14} The instrument is accredited to Albert Humphrey who guided a research project at Stanford University in 1960 and 1970.

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culture, and to be so in a proactive way, creating networks for sharing actual experiences.

Some **Strategies** are indicated, crucial aspects that must be considered so that the processes we wish to initiate will be assumed and carried out in the various realities.

Then **Methodological Choices** are delineated, which can be concretized in the various contexts to favor the implementation of the strategies.

Finally, **Evaluation** allows the verification of the measure to which the objectives have been reached in view of the continuity of the process.

Our intent is to contribute to the understanding that the elaboration of this instrument becomes the place of synergy for a coordinated and convergent animation with the specific contribution of every sector.

### 3.1 Where We are Situated

For a more timely analysis of the context in which we are situated, we propose the **SWOT Analysis**, an instrument utilized in programming strategies to evaluate the Strengths and Weaknesses, the Opportunities, and Threats of whatever project, plan, program, initiative that is to be elaborated, improved, developed, and evaluated.

**The SWOT Analysis** allows reasoning in a systematic way in regard to the strategic objectives to be faced, simultaneously keeping under control the external ambient, the organization, the factors that may facilitate and those that risk compromising the attainment of the objectives. They allow for the establishment of the priorities to assume in order to render communicative and educative action efficacious on the basis of a hierarchy of choices and interventions.

The analysis of the situation to identify **opportunities** to emphasize and **threats** to keep under control necessitates
the gathering of data that has a direct or indirect correlation with the objective. In this way, the gathering of data permits the strategic implementation of communication actions, improving their quality and efficacy.

In the **SWOT Analysis**, **Strengths** mean all those capacities and potentials internal to Institutions (Provinces, Schools, Oratories...), useful for reaching the objective.

For example: the Preventive System as spirituality and method, the Family Spirit as the style of community management, coordination for communion, the Institute’s international and intercultural character, co-responsibility with the laity, networking, awareness of the need for formation in the field of communication.

**Weaknesses** consist of internal insufficiencies of the Institution that are obstacles to reaching the objective.

For example: difficulty in changing mentality, difficulty in adapting our educative proposals to the rapid cultural changes, gap between theory and practice, rigidity of structures, compartmentalized mentality, difficulty in finding space and time for reflective reading of social-cultural changes from the perspective of a believer, difficulty in being with the young.

**Opportunities** are all those external conditions of the territory and of the culture useful to the Institution in reaching the objective.

For example: communication as the new areopagus, communication technology that reduces distances and speeds up communication, rapport with the groups of the Salesian Family, ecclesial, civil, and religious organizations.

**Threats** are the external conditions of the territory and of the culture that hinder reaching the objective.

For example: political and social situations, precarious economies, dictatorships, lack of respect for human
rights, relativism, hedonism, individualism, family crisis and fragility, new forms of poverty and exclusion, dependency on new technologies, loss of a sense of the common good and social responsibility, discrepancy between values proposed by the media and those proposed by our educative environments.

The four aspects of the **SWOT Analysis** present a transversal reading in which the internal **Strong Points** help to confront the **External Threats** and the **Opportunities** of the context can help to offset the **Internal Weaknesses** of the Institution.

The following outline illustrates what we have just said.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>SWOT ANALYSIS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strong Points:</strong> Capacities and potentials of the Institution useful for reaching the objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Opportunities:</strong> External conditions useful to the Institution for reaching the objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2 Objectives

In order to be pertinent and verifiable, the objective must respond to some criteria. It is necessary that it be concrete, simple, measureable, accessible, and truly attainable by the organization and its resources, realistic, and organized in time frames.

We consider indispensable some general objectives necessary for living as Salesian educators in the contemporary context:

- Favoring convergent processes for a growing awareness of being immersed in the communication culture
- Allowing to emerge the formative implications in reference to the communication culture
- Promoting ever more efficacious processes of education-communication-evangelization
- Favoring a change of mentality that leads to renewing educative practices and the role of the educator in line with the changes of the new culture
- Promoting journeys of Educommunication in order to be proactive in the new culture
- Creating networks among the diverse realities, sharing ongoing experiences, and making “best practices” visible.

3.3 Target

In a Communication Plan it is important to be clear about the differentiation of the recipients of the actions. The identification of the recipients necessitates a subdivision by homogeneous and meaningful groups so that the actions may be more focused and efficacious.

For example, in addressing the whole Educating Community, subgroups can be identified, such as:
– Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, subdivided by age, skills, and roles.

– Young people subdivided by levels of educational attainment, age, different faith journeys, cultural and social differences.

– Collaborators subdivided by skills, roles, age, different faith journeys, cultural and social differences.

– Lay members of the Salesian Family, parents, volunteers…

3.4 Strategies

The choice of strategies consists in translating the objective into actions and indicating the directions that must be followed in the concrete realization of the Communication Plan.

A communication strategy is a complex of harmonious decisions that indicate which factors are to be acted upon in reference to the objectives identified so as to have greater communicative capacity, and attain the expected results.

On the basis of the objectives proposed, priority must be given to the following strategic factors:

– Lifelong learning

Continuous change requires the capacity to “learn and unlearn” in order to be in a stance of flexibility and research in the face of present challenges and needs. This presupposes entering into a vision of formation as an ongoing process that lasts for one’s whole life in order to place oneself adequately in the changing scenarios of a culture in evolution. Special attention is reserved for the first phases of formation: their questions on communications, cultural styles, religious manifestations, and new visibility of the Salesian charism.
– Network Mentality

This is a way of thinking, proposing, working, and acting proper to today’s complexity. It requires multiple responses that take into account different outlooks, interpretations, and points of view that are sometimes divergent.

It is the capacity to place oneself in connection with diverse interlocutors, carrying out dialogue and sharing on a broad range.

It is an interior disposition for constant discernment and to confront oneself with cultural mutations and interpreting them with a believer’s vision, opening oneself to other abilities and professional preparation for a mission in tune with today. It constitutes the concrete actualization of coordination for communion.

– Education on How to Live in the Network

Formation is called to intercept the new technologies. This means accepting the need of a cultural change. It entails placing ourselves in line with the fact that formation is re-planned in relation to the media, understood as an integral resource for formative intervention. It implies rethinking the meaning of teaching/learning with particular attention to the formative needs of the subject and personalization of the journey. It entails reviewing the spaces of formation, that is, the formative environments for integrating diverse instruments and languages. Pedagogical intervention will have the characteristics of collaboration and cooperation in which the resources and responsibilities of formators and the young people in formation are integrated. It deals with a pedagogy that values reflection, research, and creativity, one that impassesions for action, and promotes autonomy and self-esteem.
Communicative Ecosystems

One of today’s challenges is to transform every ambient into a communicative ecosystem that keeps in mind heterogeneous cultural experiences, new information and communication technologies. Communicative Ecosystem, in a Salesian vision, means the educative environment, family climate, and group work. Every work can consider itself an ecosystem in which the Educating Community, the individual persons, and the physical structures are essential basic elements and nourish a climate that facilitates the educative process. The Oratory, school, welcome centers are inserted in a broader educative environment. In them, a group of relationships, actions, and conditions exist that mutually relate with each other. They involve everyone in an immense communicative power capable of influencing institutions, educators, and the young in both educative contents and methodologies. (Cf. FMA Institute, Educommunication: Taking Small Steps in the New Culture, Gong 4 Series, 2008, 40-41)

3.5 Methodology

The methodology that makes the strategies operative is born in one’s own context and rooted in the time and space where the action is realized. Every local reality will identify the most efficacious methodological steps. Keeping in mind the communication culture, it is suggested to prioritize journeys that favor:

– Climate of participation, belonging, creativity
– Constructive approach to the emerging novelties (technological, cultural, communicative, social),
– Promotion of a systematic vision in contrast to the fragmentation, partiality, and short term vision,
– Management of change that reconciles what is worth saving and what must be transformed, focusing on new real-
ities, projects, and proposals to adopt in order to leave space for the new.

3.6 Evaluation

Evaluation of the Communication Plan is important for verifying the correspondence between planning and actualization of what the Plan itself foresees. It aims at awareness of the effective attainment of the proposed objectives, of the real efficacy, efficiency, and feasibility of the identified communicative processes, and of the capacity for involvement.

There can be two aspects to evaluate. The first takes into consideration the Communication Plan as such, its correct drafting, its concrete feasibility in the various phases in which it is articulated, its effective function as an instrument of innovation, its capacity to promote involvement, connection, and motivation.

The second verifies the concrete actualization of the Plan, particularly in regard to its efficacy for internal and external communication.
CONCLUSIONS

We introduced ourselves in this fifth booklet of the Gong Series by affirming our aim “to weave a conversation on the communication culture in an educative vision for the entire Institute and to create awareness of the impact of contemporary scenarios on our identity and educative mission.”

At the end of this reflection, we express our wish that our conversation will not end with this last page but rather become an argument for further study, dialogue, and a research that is prolonged in our communities and in all Educating Communities.

We have purposely inserted the subtitle, “A Map to Orient Ourselves.” We believe that reflection on a theme that is so crucial and necessary today calls for significant support. This support comes from the concrete tapestry of life, that of the Provinces, communities, and individual persons who can enrich the analysis made by comparing and enriching them with the lived realities of their own contexts. We are aware, in fact, that the theme on which we have conversed evolves with extreme rapidity and that the communication culture is a paradigm in continuous change. This commits us to seek methods of approach that can provide favorable orientation in our educative mission to the young who are the first to interiorize the novelties and who live immersed in the media world, just as we are and, probably, even more.

The ecclesial journey is indicated to us by Benedict XVI. He encourages us to commit ourselves to roads of “Truth, Proclamation, and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age” (45th Message World Communications Day, 2011). He indicates the style as well, “Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization” because “educating ourselves to commu-
communication means learning to listen and to contemplate, besides speaking. This is particularly important for the agents of evangelization” (46th Message WCD, 2012). The Pope reminds us again that “today the profound transformation taking place in the communication field guides the flux of immense cultural and social mutations. New technologies are not only changing the way of communicating, but communication in itself… a new way of learning and thinking is being born, with unheard of opportunities to establish relationships and build communion” (45th Message WCD, 2011).

This touches us very closely as Educators of the new generations.
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**ENGLISH:**


SPANISH:


FRENCH:


PORTUGUESE:


GLOSSARY

Cloud Computing
It is the use of computing resources (hardware and software) that are delivered as a service over a network (typically the Internet). The name comes from the use of a cloud-shaped symbol as an abstraction for the complex infrastructure it contains in system diagrams. End users access cloud-based applications through a web browser or a light-weight desktop or mobile app while the business software and user’s data are stored on servers at a remote location.

Collective Intelligence
This is a concept developed by the French scholar Pierre Lévy in his book by the same name published in France in 1994. According to Lévy, “No one knows everything; everyone knows something. The totality of knowing resides in humanity.” The role of digital information technologies is fundamental insofar as it allows for the “real-time coordination of intelligence” within a virtual scenario in continual transformation.

Connective Intelligence
The term was introduced by Derrick de Kerckhove, director of the McLuhan Program of Culture and Technology in Toronto, in a veiled polemic discussion with the Frenchman Pierre Lévy on his theory of collective intelligence. De Kerckhove substituted it with the term “connective” in his book entitled Connective Intelligence (1997). In practice, connective intelligence is unleashed when the Net works as a unified biological system. Online communication has created a new category of mind, a connective mind, to which there “attaches” or from which there “detaches” without influencing the integrity of the structure.
**Cracker/Hacker**
1. Cracker: One who breaks security on a system. Coined by hackers in defense against journalistic misuse of the term “hacker.” The term “cracker” reflects a strong revulsion at the theft and vandalism perpetrated by cracking rings.
2. Hacker: a) A person who enjoys exploring the details of programmable systems and how to stretch their capabilities. b) One who programs enthusiastically. c) A person who is good at programming quickly. d) [deprecated] A malicious meddler who tries to discover sensitive information by poking around. The correct term for this sense is “cracker”.

**Cyber culture**
The culture arising from the use of computer networks, as for communication, entertainment, work, and business. It is the culture within and among users of computer networks. This cyber culture may be purely an online culture or it may span both virtual and physical worlds.

**Cyberspace**
A metaphor for describing the non-physical terrain created by computer systems. Online systems, for example, create a cyberspace within which people can communicate with one another, do research, or simply window shop. Like physical space, cyberspace contains objects (files, mail messages, graphics, etc.) and different modes of transportation and delivery.

**Digital/Analog**
In analog technology, a wave is recorded or used in its original form. So, for example, in an analog tape recorder, a signal is taken straight from the microphone and laid onto tape. The wave from the microphone is an analog wave, and therefore the wave on the tape is analog as well. In digital technology, the analog wave is sampled at some interval, and then turned into numbers that are stored in the digital device. On a CD, the sampling rate is 44,000 samples per second. So on a CD, there are 44,000 numbers stored per
second of music. To hear the music, the numbers are turned into a voltage wave that approximates the original wave.

**Digital convergence**

Digital convergence refers to the convergence of four industries into one conglomerate (Information Technologies, Telecommunication, Consumer Electronics, and Entertainment). This provides new, innovative solutions to consumers and business users. Based on digital technologies and digitized content it encompasses converged devices (such as smartphones, laptops, internet enabled entertainment devices and set top boxes), converged applications (e.g. music download on PC and handheld) and converged networks (IP networks).

**Digital divide**

(Also known as technology gap) The term digital divide refers to the gap between those people with effective access to digital and information technology and those without access to it. It includes the imbalances in physical access to technology as well as the imbalances in resources and skills needed to effectively participate as a digital citizen. Groups often discussed in the context of a digital divide include socioeconomic (rich/poor), racial (majority/minority), generational (young/old) or geographical (urban/rural).

**Digital Natives/Digital Immigrants**

Marc Prensky coined the terms in his work “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants” published in 2001. A digital native is a person who was born during or after the general introduction of digital technology and through interacting with digital technology from an early age, has a greater understanding of its concepts. Other discourse identifies a digital native as a person who understands the value of digital technology and uses this to seek out opportunities for implementing it. A digital immigrant is an individual who was born before the existence of digital technology and adopted it to some extent later in life.
**E-learning**
Electronic learning (or e-Learning) is an umbrella term for providing computer instruction online over the Internet, private distance learning networks or in-house via an intranet. In companies it is referred to the strategies that use the company network to deliver training courses to employees. In the school setting, it is the use of computers to organize and manage an instructional program for students. In the universities, e-learning is used to define a specific mode to attend a course where the students rarely, if ever, attend face-to-face because they study on-line.

**Global village**
Global Village is a term coined by Marshall McLuhan. He described how the globe has been contracted into a village by electric technology and the instantaneous movement of information. This fosters the idea of a conglomerate yet unified global community.

**Hardware/Software**
All physical contents of a computer are hardware. This form is given to all electrical and mechanical devices attached to the computer for the purpose of input, process, and storage and output operations. Software is a general term used for computer programs. A computer program is a planned, step by step set of instructions that directs the computer what to do and how to do.

**Hypertext**
Hypertext is a linkage between related information. By selecting a word in an article, more information about that subject is retrieved, which could be a definition, encyclopedic entry or another article. Hypertext is the foundation of the World Wide Web, enabling users to click on a link to obtain more information from a source anywhere in the world.
Information Technology
IT is an umbrella term for the entire computer industry. It actually took 40 years before the industry settled on what to call itself. First it was “electronic data processing” (EDP), followed by “management information systems” (MIS) and then “information systems” (IS). However, this term is being more and more frequently substituted by ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), which refers to the convergence in act among the sectors of information and telecommunication.

Internet Addiction Disorder
Internet addiction disorder (IAD) refers to the problematic use of the Internet. It has been formally recognized as a disorder by the American Psychological Association. People who develop problems with their Internet use may start off using the Internet on a casual basis and then progress to using the technology in dysfunctional ways. The amount of time by itself, however, is not as important a factor as the ways in which the person’s Internet use is interfering with their daily functioning.

Internet Telephony (Voip)
(Also IP telephony or Voice-over-Internet protocol (VoIP)) Internet telephony is the two-way transmission of voice over a packet-switched IP network. IP telephony is an umbrella term for all real-time applications over IP, including voice over instant messaging (IM) and videoconferencing.

Linux
Linux is the name usually given to any Unix-like computer operating system that uses the Linux kernel. It is a very popular open source operating system that runs on a variety of hardware platforms. Linux runs in most of the servers on the Internet and in countless appliances and consumer electronics devices.
Many-to-many Communication/ One-to-many Communication

Many-to-many communication, or narrowcasting, proper to the www and e-mail, is differentiated from one-to-many communication or broadcasting, typical of the means of mass communication, such as radio, cinema, and television. If in traditional media the control of the content and form of the message is all in the hands of the person who transmits it, here form and content may be produced and modified by whoever is the active subject in the communication.

Microblogging

It is a broadcast medium in the form of blogging. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically smaller in both actual and aggregate file size. The most famous example is Twitter.

Multitasking

In computer, multitasking is a method where multiple tasks, also known as processes, are performed during the same period of time. The tasks share common processing resources, such as a CPU and main memory. Human multitasking is the best performance by an individual of appearing to handle more than one task at the same time. The term is derived from computer multitasking.

My Media

A term coined by Nicholas Negroponte in opposition to Mass Media. My media refers to media that is highly personalized, in which it is the user who composes the programming and decides what he/she wants to see, read or hear and asks it of the computer or TV. Thanks to interactive means and software agents that find the desired information.

Netiquette

The fusion of two words: network and etiquette. It is the neologism for “Internet politeness.”
New Media
The collection of the new means of communication constituted by the Internet, digital TV, multimedia support, cell phones and telemetric that are the result of technological advancement on a common basis that came about toward the end of the ‘60’s.

New Nomads
A paradoxical condition of the contemporary person. The advent of the new technologies would seem to favor total immobility. On the other hand, however, the widespread diffusion of cell phones, more and more similar to true and proper computers, and in general of wireless technologies, place into evidence the tendency toward nomadism, or the possibility of using the benefits anywhere.

Open Source
Refers to software that is distributed with its source code (goods and knowledge) so that end user organizations and vendors can modify it for their own purposes. Most open source licenses allow the software to be redistributed without restriction under the same terms of the license.

Paradigm
In the epistemological meaning, paradigm is the coherent whole of theories and methods that characterize a phase of the development of a determined science.

Portal
A web portal is a site that provides a single function via a web page or site. It often functions as a point of access to information on the World Wide Web. Portals present information from diverse sources in a unified way. Aside from the search engine standard, web portals offer other services such as e-mail, news, stock prices, infotainment and various other features.
**Portable Media Player**
A portable media player (PMP) is a consumer electronics device that is capable of storing and playing digital media such as audio, images, video, documents, etc. The data is typically stored on a hard drive, microdrive, or flash memory. A popular example is an Apple iPod.

**Semantic Web**
The Semantic Web is a system that enables machines to “understand” and respond to complex human requests based on their meaning. Imagine this scenario. You’re a software consultant and have just received a new project. You’re to create a series of SOAP-based Web services. First, you need to learn a bit about SOAP, so you search for the term using your favorite search engine. There are listings for dish detergents, facial soaps, and even soap operas mixed into the results. Only after sifting through multiple listings and reading through the linked pages are you able to find information about the SOAP-based Web services. Because of the different semantic associations of the word “soap,” the results you receive are varied in relevance, and you still have to do a lot of work to find the information you’re looking for. However, in a Semantic Web-enabled environment, you could use a Semantic Web agent to search the Web for “SOAP” where SOAP is a type of technology specification used in Web services. This time, the results of your search will be relevant.

**Shareware**
Software freely distributed on the Internet which, if used, requires the payment of an amount (generally limited) to its creator. It deals with programs covered by a copyright, and is different from freeware (software which is free).

**Smartphone/ Feature Phone**
A smartphone is a mobile phone built on a mobile operating system, with more advanced computing capability and con-
nectivity than a feature phone (a low-end mobile phone). Examples of a smartphone are iPhone and Blackberry.

**Tablet Computer**
A tablet PC is a wireless, portable personal computer with a touch screen interface. The tablet form factor is typically smaller than a notebook computer but larger than a smartphone. The most common type of tablet is the slate style, like Apple’s iPad or Microsoft’s Surface.

**Usability**
We commonly refer to the usability by the term user friendly, to indicate those characteristics of the facility of use that also allow non-expert users to efficaciously interact with the product. Usability does not only refer to software products, but may be extended to all the means by which the person interacts: from work tools, to objects of daily use (such as the cell phone, microwave, and stereo), to the control panel for processes.

**User Generated Content**
It is the production of content by the general public rather than by paid professionals and experts in the field. It is also called “peer production,” and mostly available on the Web via blogs and wikis, user generated content refers to material such as the daily news, encyclopedias and other references, movie and product reviews as well as articles on any subject. It is one of the hallmark features that distinguishes Web 2.0.

**Video Game Console**
It is an interactive entertainment computer that produces a video display signal which can be used with a display device (a television, monitor, etc.) to display a video game. Three popular game consoles are Sony’s PlayStation 3 (PS3), Nintendo’s Wii and Microsoft’s Xbox.
Web Radio
Web radio (also internet radio, net radio, streaming radio, e-radio webcasting) is an audio service transmitted via the Internet. Web radio involves streaming media, presenting listeners with a continuous stream of audio that cannot be paused or replayed. It is distinct from podcasting, which involves downloading rather than streaming. Many Web radio services are associated with a corresponding traditional (terrestrial) radio station or radio network.

Web TV/Internet TV
Internet television is a general term that covers the delivery of television shows and other video content over the internet by video streaming technology, typically by major traditional television broadcasters. It should not be confused with Web television which is a technology that enable you to surf the Web on your TV. Most WebTV products today consist of a small box that connects to your telephone line and television. It makes a connection to the Internet via your telephone service and then converts the downloaded Web pages to a format that can be displayed on your TV. More recently, the name WebTV has been trademarked by Microsoft.
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