

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF

# Communication



All animal species have ways to communicate, but humans are the only species capable of spoken and written language. Throughout history, humans have looked for ways to communicate with more people over longer distances.



**1.5  
million  
B.C.E.**

### Prehistoric communication

**TALKING and SIGNALING:** The first humans must have communicated with sounds, hand gestures and facial expressions. Historians don't know exactly how, or when, formal spoken language developed. Once language developed, what forms of communication were used? Storytelling was a popular way to pass history from one generation to the next. Drums or smoke signals could be used to send messages over long distances. But signaling wasn't always practical. It could attract attention from enemies – and how could you be sure that the people in the next valley or mountain range would understand your symbols.

**38,000  
B.C.E.**

**CAVE PAINTING:** The earliest form of written communication is cave painting, using paints made from the juice of plants, colored minerals, or animal blood. Paintings have been found in caves on every continent. Scholars aren't sure why these paintings were made. The most popular theory is that they were used to tell other humans about which animals were safe to eat.

This painting, right, is one of 600 found in a cave in Lascaux, France. The paintings are more than 10,000 years old.



Cave painting, Lascaux, France, 15,000 to 10,000 B.C.

**3200  
B.C.E.**

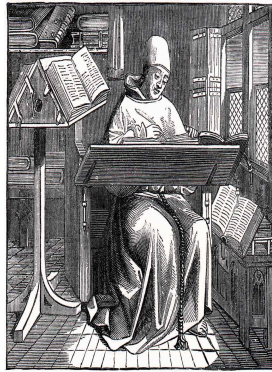
## WRITING IT DOWN

### WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Writing is considered the greatest invention in human history. The first writing system we know of was developed in Western Asia, by the ancient Sumerians more than 3000 years B.C.E. Over time, cultures in other parts of the world developed their own writing systems. The earliest examples of written language are inscribed on **clay tablets** (right), carved in **stone**, or written on **animal skins**.



**700  
C.E.**



SCRIPTORIUM MONK AT WORK. (From *Lacritz*.)

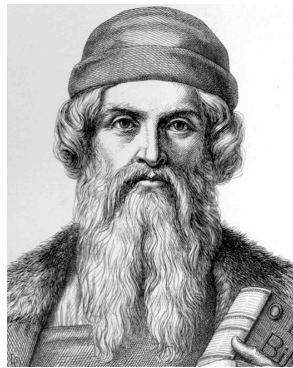
### BOOKS

**Paper** was invented in China about 105 C.E. By 700, hand-written books, were being made on paper in many parts of the world. But it took a lot of time, because they were made one by one.

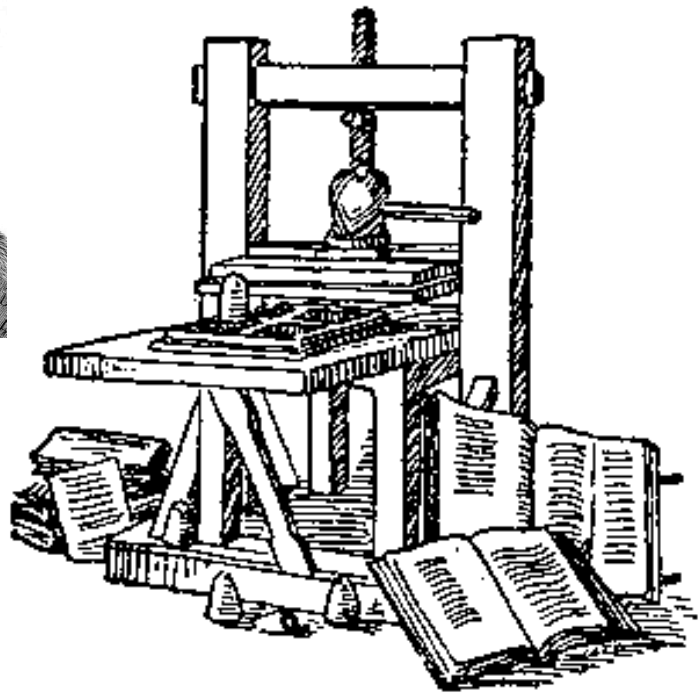
**1448**

### THE PRINTING PRESS

The invention of the **printing press** made it possible to mass-produce books. In just 50 years, printers had already published nine million copies of books.



The printing press invented by Johann Gutenberg in 1448 revolutionized mass communication.



## COMMUNICATION GOES ELECTRONIC

Developments in electronic communication, beginning in the 1800s, made it possible to communicate faster and over longer distances than ever before.

1827

### THE TELEGRAPH

The telegraph allowed for instant communication across long distances for the first time in human history. The telegraph sends electrostatic signals through a wire, using a code perfected by American Samuel Morse. In 1876, a waterproof cable was laid under the Atlantic to link the U.S. and Great Britain. By 1880, telegraph lines stretched around the world.



1876



### THE TELEPHONE

Telegraph messages were sent in code, which meant they had to be encoded on one end and decoded on the other. Alexander Graham Bell made long-distance communication simpler when he invented the telephone. In the early years, telephones were a luxury that was too expensive for most families; most telephone users were big companies.

1920

### RADIO

After World War I ended, the short-wave technology used during the war turned into the hottest new communication fad. Radios were incredibly popular during the Great Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s. People were very poor and radio programs were an inexpensive form of entertainment.



1940



### TELEVISION

Television made its official debut at the 1939 New York World's Fair, but it took more than 10 years to become popular. As the years passed and TV prices dropped, television was transformed from a luxury to a household essential. Today, the majority of homes have at least one television set.

1977

## DIGITAL, PORTABLE, PERSONAL

In the past 40 years, changes in communications technology have made it possible for instant communication that is easy to carry around.

### CELL PHONES

It may be hard to believe, but the first cell phone research began in 1843 when Michael Faraday conducted research to see if space could conduct electricity. Fast forward to 1973, when Dr. Martin Cooper is credited with inventing the first portable handset. Four years later, cell phones went public. In the 37 years since then, the US cellular market has grown from \$3 million a year to \$30 billion a year. **Smartphones**, which first debuted in 1993, combine the functions of a telephone, a personal computer and a camera into one small, portable package. Smartphone users can check the Web and communicate by e-mail, text message or phone wherever they go. They have turned their users into a new generation of “citizen journalists,” who can provide real-time reporting of events in words, photos and video, turning everyone into a journalist.

Going Mobile | The evolution of the cellphone



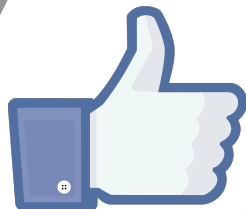
### THE INTERNET and EMAIL

In its most basic form, an “Internet” is a group of computers able to connect to each other and share information. The original Internet was invented in 1967 for military purposes. In the early ‘90s, the first web browser made it easy to find information on the Internet. E-mail was first created in 1971 when an engineer invented a way for researchers to leave messages on each other’s computers. Together, web browsers and e-mail have made the Internet an easy tool for communication, entertainment and information gathering, 24 hours a day.

### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a special class of websites with content created when the sites’ users interact online.

**Facebook**, the world’s largest social networking site, was developed in 2004. By the end of 2012, Facebook had more than 1 billion users worldwide. **Twitter**, created in 2006, had more than 500 million users by 2013.



Early 1990's

Early 2000's

**SOURCES:**

"1 bn monthly users; over 200 bn photos; key results from Facebook's Q4 filings," by FP staff. FirstpostTechnology, February 1, 2013. Accessed February 4, 2013 at <http://www.creativedisplaysnow.com/articles/history-of-communication-from-cave-drawings-to-the-web.htm>

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**Image credits**

<http://www.ironicans.com/images/cellgirl.gif>

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