



Characters Of The Information And Communication Industry

Richard F. Bellaver

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I teach a graduate course called the History and Culture of the Information and Communications Industry. This book is a result of that course. It shows how the world has moved from primitive means of communication to the integrated multi-media situation we are in today. Its concentration is on the fields of journalism, telecommunications, broadcasting, and computing. Emphasis is placed on the leaders of the areas of interest and the political and cultural surroundings that encouraged or discouraged growth of the industry. One of the leaders mentioned is that lucky fellow Johann Gutenberg. Gutenberg certainly built a press that used movable type, but he became famous because of an early confluence of technology. At the time of his work good cheap paper became available from Italy, and longer lasting inks were developed in India. The technology of printing took off because quality and economy came together. We also are lucky that we know so much about Gutenberg because the Germans had such a good legal record keeping system in the sixteenth century and Mr. G. had so many run-ins with the law. Four hundred years later the confluence of satellite broadcasting and color printing techniques enabled another printing leader, Allen Neuharth, to produce a national newspaper called USA Today. This book mentions several lucky incidents or "what ifs" in the computer industry. For example, where would Microsoft be if Gary Kildall of Digital Research Corp. hadn't taken off to fly his airplane when the IBMers came to invite him to build the operating system for their new PC? Or before that, what if Charles Ramlett Flint had reconsidered hiring a convicted felon to run the Computing-Tabulating Recording Company when he brought on Thomas Watson Sr. who turned it into IBM? Or before that, what if Charles Babbage had had the money and the machinery to do the fine grinding work on the Analytical Engine. Politics, especially represent

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