

By Steve N. Jackson

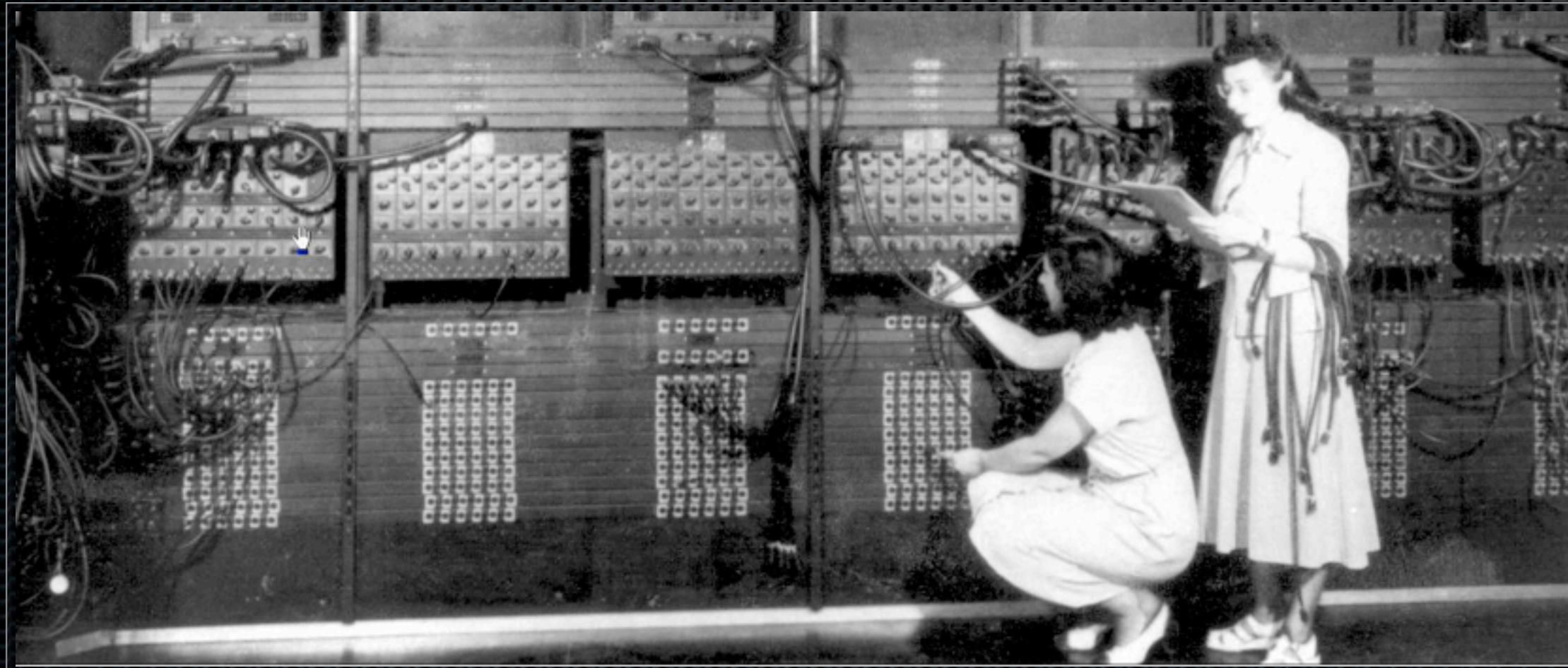
# Modern Convergence

# Thesis:

Modern convergence developed after World War Two with the rise of digital computers. The main feature of this revolution was the opening of professional communication systems to more people, and a blurring of the employment lines in various mediums.

## Media Convergence:

The movement of video, audio, textual, image, and graphic communication onto a single platform, where information can be accessed in any combination. Brought about by the creation of a “plastic” media technology called “digital media” and by the rise of “smart” information systems.

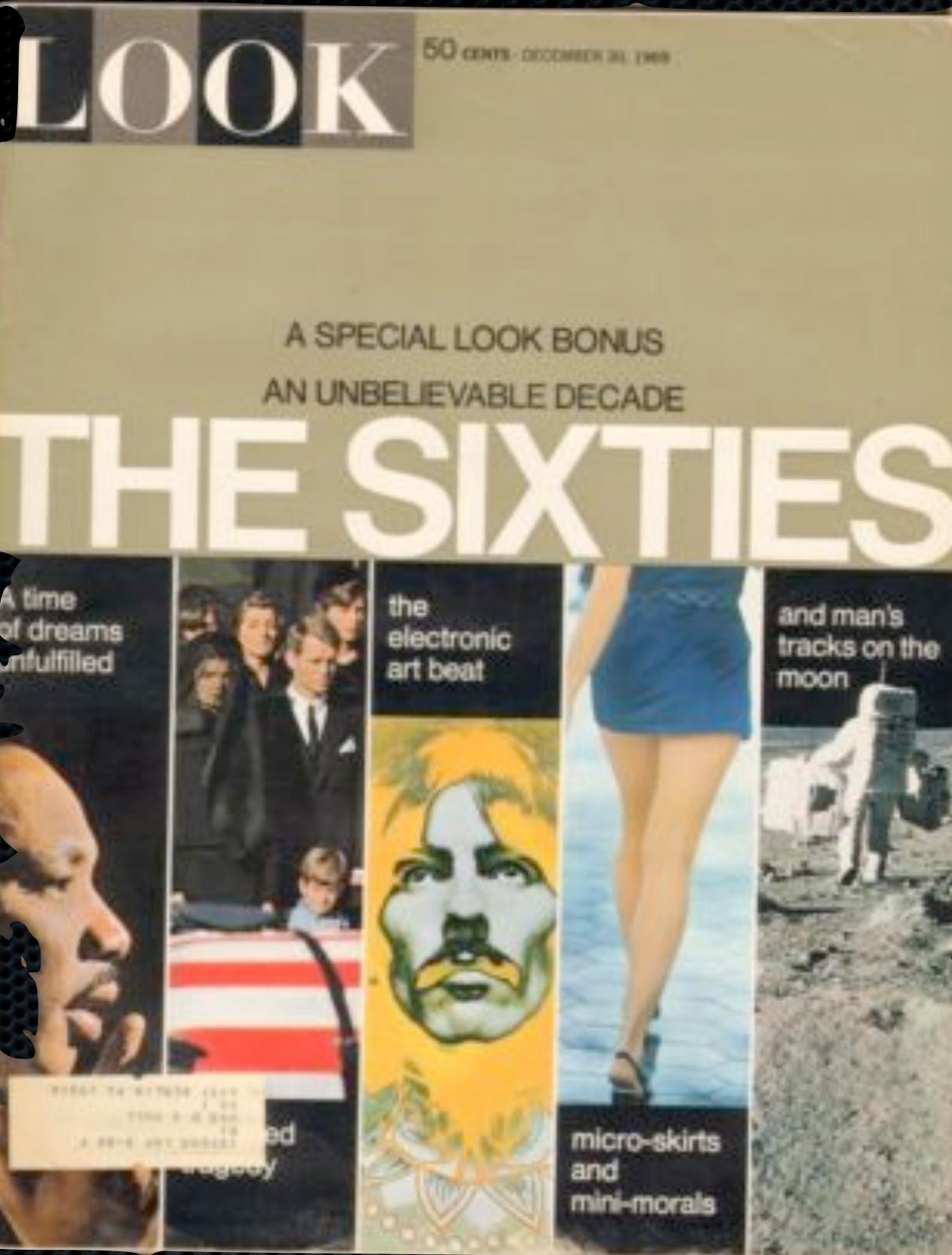


Eniac (US Army Photo  
Courtesy of [Michael John Muuss](#))

# The Beginning



- Media Convergence can be traced to the 1960s.
- Computers began to handle advertising statistics and subscription management.
- Few connected to rise of convergence with changes in the media industry.



# First Sign of Change

- New computer driven statistical models limited the value of general magazine ads making television advertising more lucrative. The first casualty was *Look Magazine*, which closed shop in October 17, 1971.

# Reaction to the failure of LOOK:



- Magazines grew smaller and more specialized, but their staffs increased their skill pools. At very small magazines, the difference between an editor, photographer, staff writer, and designer became one of limited importance.

# Rise of the Personal Computer

- Apple Computer introduced the Apple II which quickly became a significant player in mass computing by providing an open platform for commercial software. Visicalc, and early spreadsheet would drive Apple sales.

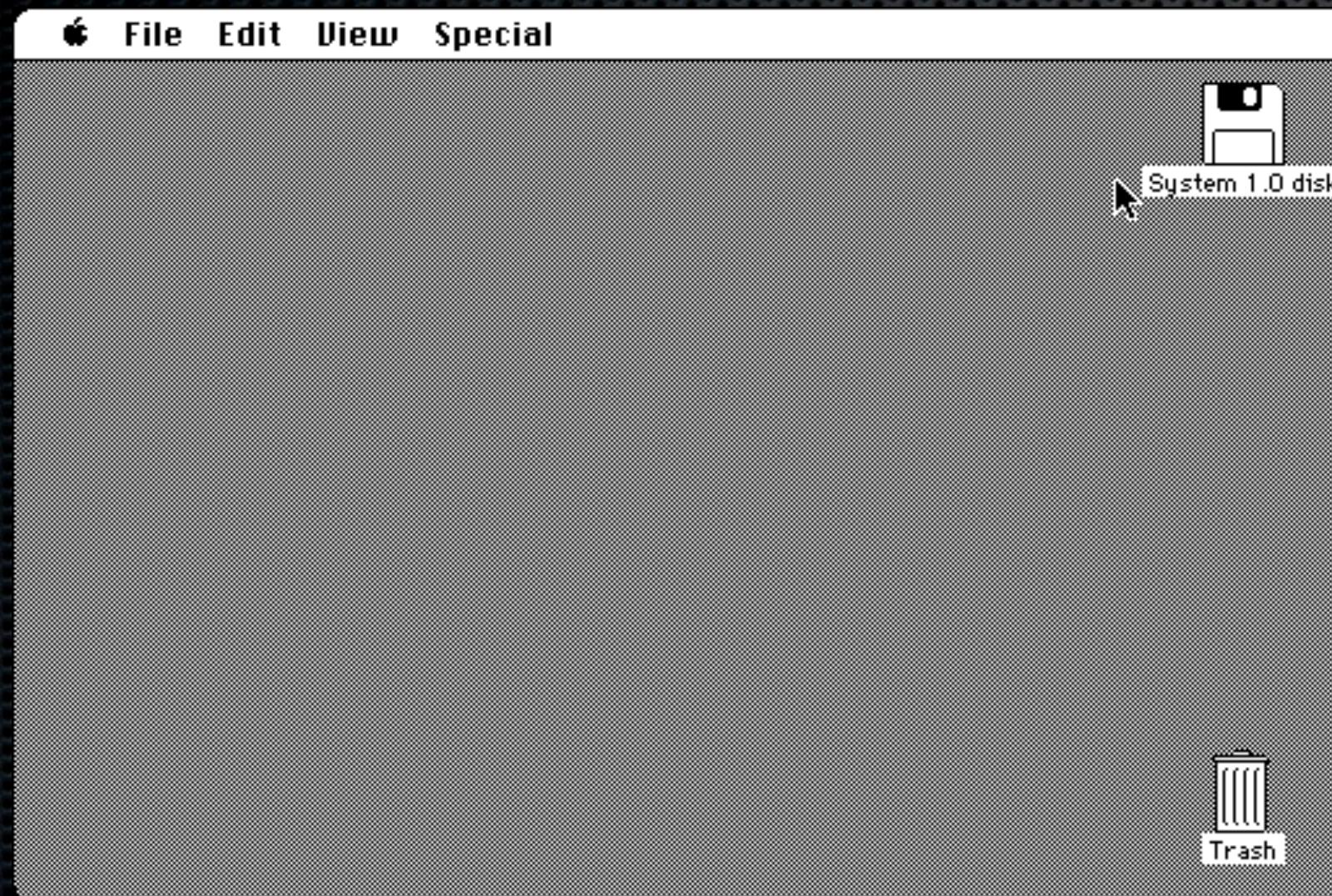


# The Personal Computer Revolution



- The PC revolution shook the industry and continues to be important to this day. Video editor stations in 1980 required four to six people to operate (like a television studio). By 2012 films would be edited by small teams of visual generalists.

# Expansion of the Concept



- The 1984 release of the Apple Macintosh revolutionized computing by putting it into common operator's hands. A *What You See Is What You Get* (WYSIWIG) interface would lead to the Macintosh taking over print production design.

# Desktop Publishing



- The desktop publishing revolution eliminated thousands of secretarial positions, but made everyone a potential publisher. In 1987 I shot and developed an entire magazine spread for Home Shopping Network, although I was a video director.

# The Internet

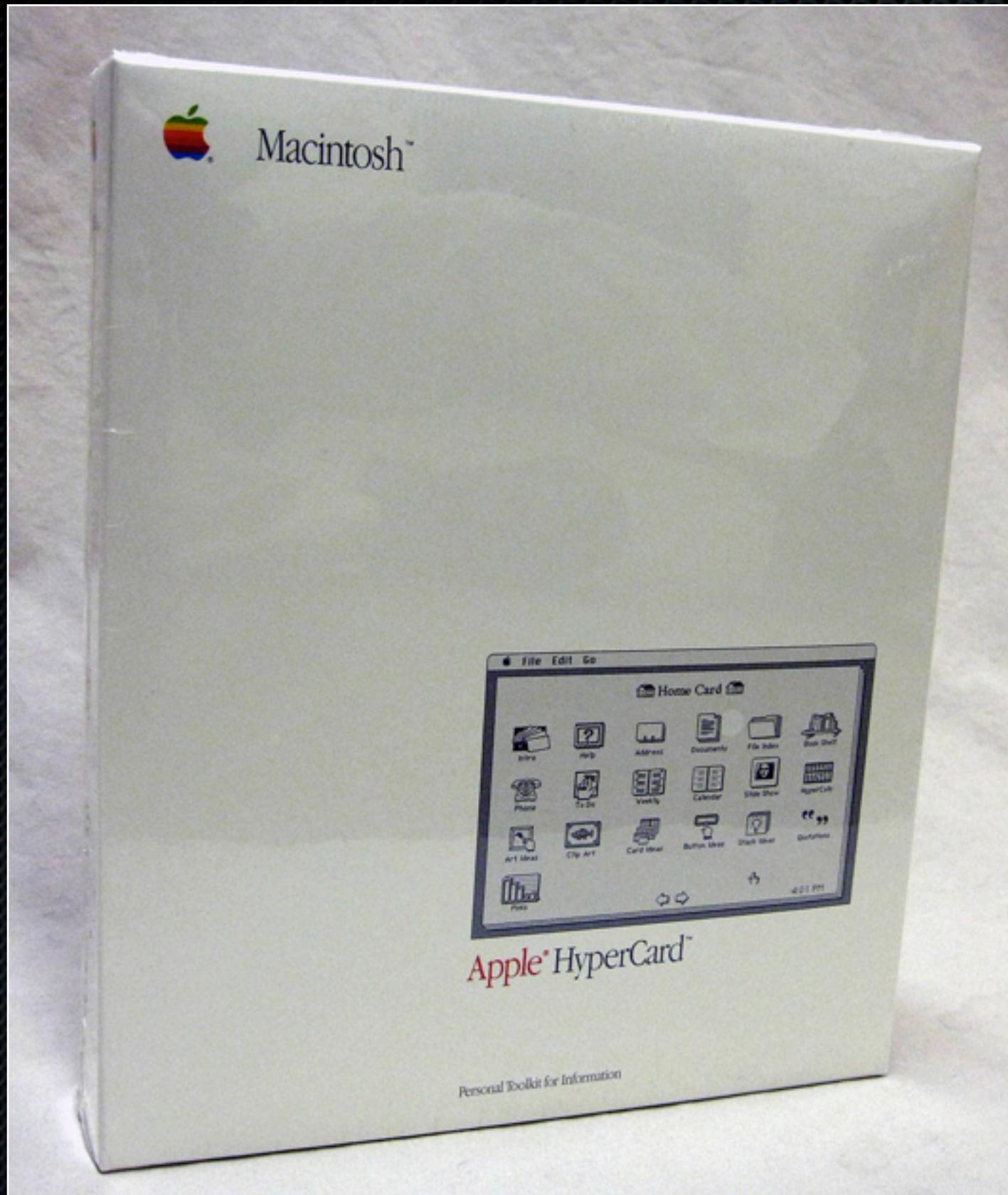
- Although often an object of ridicule, most scholars of the convergence credit Al Gore with key leadership leading to a civilian data system that would be called the Internet. Gore likely coined the term “Information Super Highway.”



# The Rise of Online



- In 1986 Home Shopping Network made me get my first e-mail address. By 1987 I was exclusively communicating with remote sites and day side production staff using this medium. E-mail was essential for cheap communication, and had the advantage of combining the information density of print with the ease of phone communication.



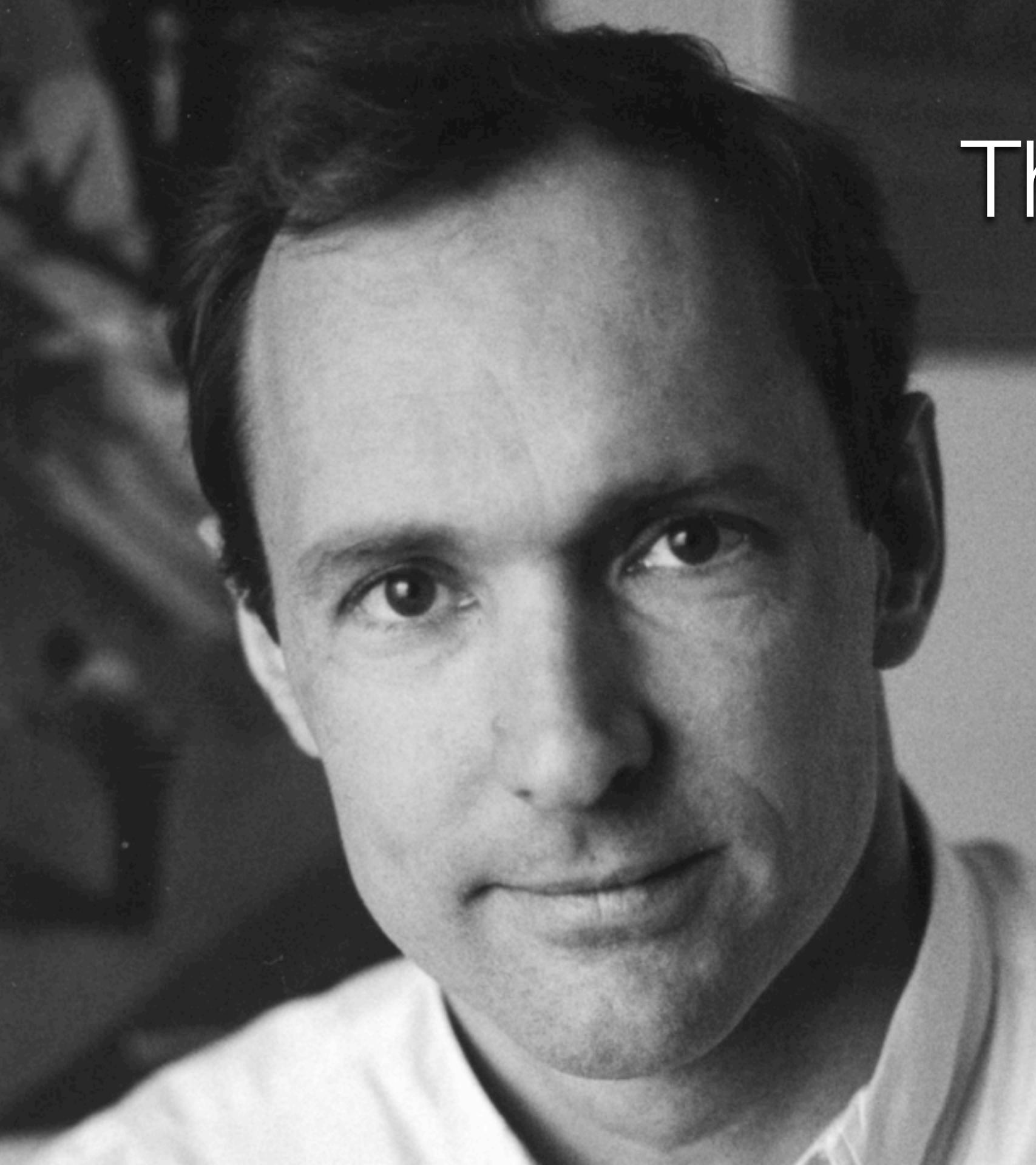
# Hypermedia

- Bill Atkinson, an Apple engineer, developed a working rapid application development and hypertext system. It was released in 1987 as Hypercard, and would influence people working with the Internet for the next decade.

# Myst



- Myst, a video game, was developed using hypercard by Robyn and Randy Miller. It sold 6 million copies at \$30 each 180 million dollars, starting a trend for video games to be more lucrative than movies in terms of sales profits.

A black and white close-up portrait of Tim Berners-Lee. He is looking slightly to his right with a faint smile. His dark hair is partially visible. The lighting is soft, creating a gentle shadow on the left side of his face.

# The World Wide Web

- Tim Berners-Lee, working at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), develops a hypertext system for document research in the nuclear community. His invention, the World Wide Web, would grow into one of the most popular mass media forms by the year 2012.

# The World Wide Web



- The World Wide Web was popular enough that it drove the movement of consumers online. In 1990, 90 million Americans used the web. Today more than 200 million Americans use the web on a regular basis.

# Creative Explosion

- Lower costs of production and an increased availability of talent leads to the slow eclipse of the traditional television channels and the rise of alternative sources of entertainment. New professional media sources produces hundreds of high quality television shows.

THE FINAL SEASON

JANUARY 6, 9PM

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# Broken Barriers

- Services like Youtube have resulted in a significant increase of middle ground and amateur entertainment that makes significant streams of revenue. Television series like *The Guild* by Felicia Day and movies like *Dr. Horrible* by Josh Whedon can make millions of dollars without going through major distributors.

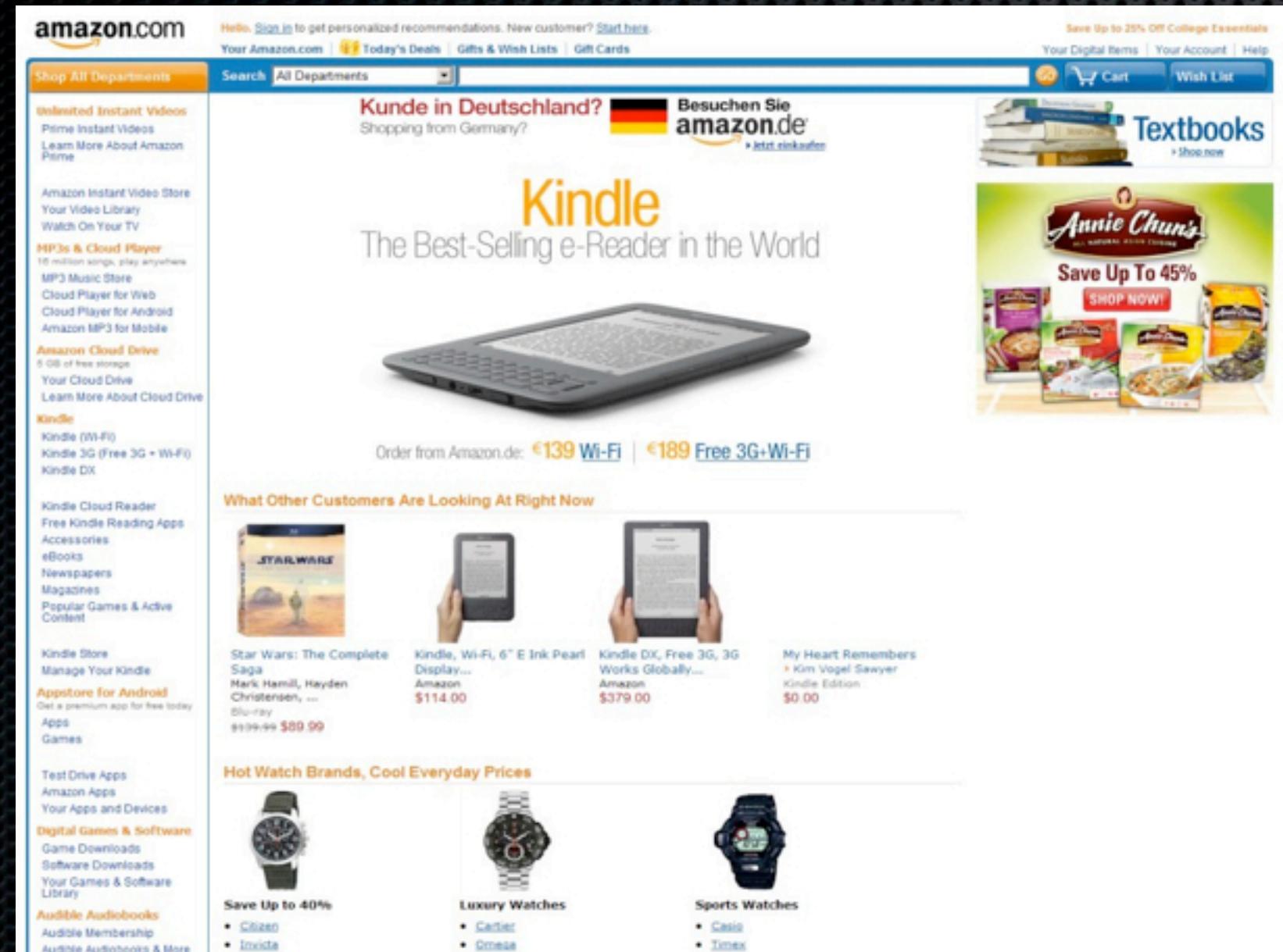




# Social Media

- Convergence has lead to rapid change in every aspect of life. Facebook, created by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004, will have nearly one billion interconnected users by 2014. Social media has changed the face of interpersonal communication, public relations, and advertising.

# Online Shopping



- Innovators like Amazon have created an environment where consumers are willing to shop for nearly any product online. Most businesses have added communication professionals to the retail industry, but have reduced retail clerk positions.

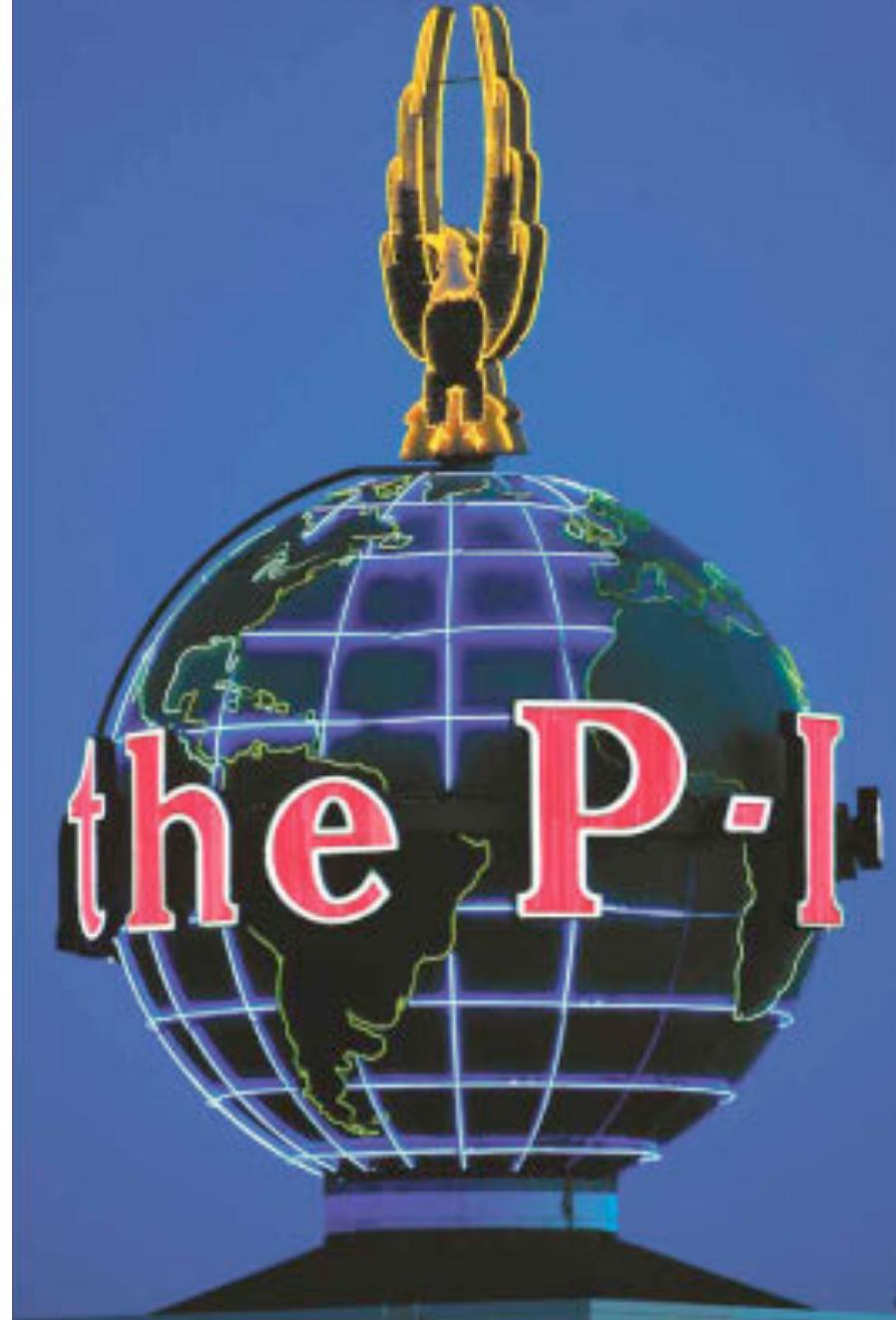
# End of an Era

- Print newspapers begin to reduce coverage in order to maximize profits in the 1990s. By 2010 this process would result in the closing or limited operations of several major papers. Despite this, papers remain in operation as content generators.

The image shows the front page of the Detroit Free Press from Tuesday, March 30, 2010. The top half features a large purple photo of a man in a baseball cap shouting. To the right is a green box with the headline "THE SECRETS TO BEATING BUTLER" and a smaller box below it reading "UDM COACH EXPLAINS HOW MSU CAN WIN SPORTS, 28". Below the purple photo is a black and white photo of a basketball player. The main title "Detroit Free Press" is in a large serif font, with "Tuesday 3/30/2010" and "www.freep.com" below it. A banner across the middle says "On guard for 178 years". The main story headline is "Ford pledges salaried bonuses". Other visible sections include "DPS MEETING" about Bobb sparing Charles Wright Academy, "LAST SUSPECT IN ALLEGED PLOT TO KILL COPS CAUGHT", "WORK WITH ME" about worker morale, "EDITORIAL" about cities having a choice, "CONSPIRACY CHARGES" about Michigan Hutaree members, "From other states", and "NASA experts to aid Toyota investigation".

COMMEMORATIVE SECTION

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer



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the world to us

For more than 145 years, the P-I has covered the news that has shaped this community. Join us on a journey through the decades. Our history is your history.

-1863-2009





# The Vice Guide

- News is no longer restricted to traditional network and publisher controlled venues. A significant number of journalists are starting boutique shops to report news that does not have to move through a corporate or political filter. An example is Shane Smith and Vice Guide.

## Register to Begin

I am a  Seeking

Near ZIP code:

Choose a username:

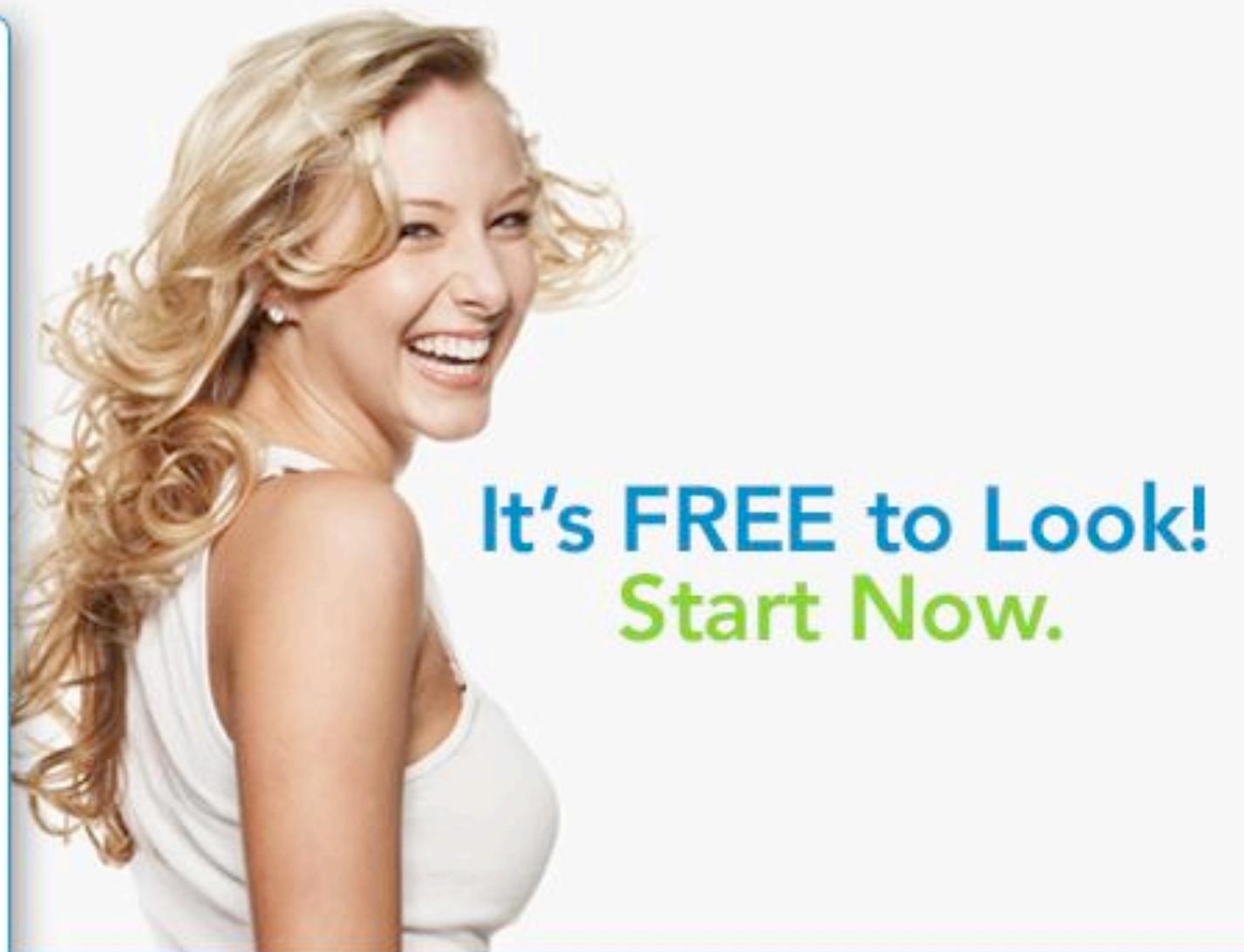
Choose a password:

Email address:

Birthday:

By choosing to continue, I certify I am at least 18 years old and have read and agree to Match.com's [privacy policy](#) and [terms of use](#).

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# Dating

- Dating websites service earn nearly \$1 billion annually. Millions of people will meet a love interest online.

# Digital Gaming

- Starting with Myst (produced using Hypercard) selling 5 million games, the gaming industry is a major industry that rivals the movie industry. Games like World of Warcraft, Angry Birds, and Call of Duty can sell 10 million copies for each new version released.





# Music and Movie Sales

- The development of the Apple iPod and the iTunes store created a popular mass sales route for digital music and movies. It also created routes for release of media without patronage of recording labels and studios.

# iPhone and iPad

- The iPad and iPhone have opened new vistas in mobile personal data access, spacial sensitive application support, rapid application and media sales, and integration of communication systems (phone and computer networks.)





# Political Action

- As late as 2006 the television show House M.D. can accurately predict that no black identified president can be elected to office.
- The Obama campaign would use Internet-based media to drive a marginal presidential bid into office based on a strong message, avoiding traditional media in the early campaign.

# The Practical Effects

- A larger number of small public relations offices exist, with practitioners having much broader skill sets.
- Journalism has seen a shift from newsrooms to dispersed specialized news organization that handle narrow, complicated reporting.
- The entertainment sector, including gaming, film, and television has blurred the lines surrounding what industry creatives belong to.
- The new paradigm has few barriers for movement but increased competition.

The modern student swims in a sea of technology that empowers the educated.



How do Communication Programs Deal with Convergence?

Converge to Survive

# Practical Effects: Curriculum

- Curriculum needs to be rethought. Old political models of curriculum development need to be discarded in fact of outcomes based curriculum models.
- The barriers between production and news must fall.
- The barriers between advertising and public relations must fall.
- Serious thought needs to be paid to the liberal arts core and the communication foundation courses.

# The Core

- All students must be able to acquire new information, develop that information into a new idea, distribute that idea among many channels, and protect the information to gain further benefit of it down the way.
- The core becomes basic skills and basic knowledge based, providing the information gathering, manipulation, and distribution skills that later classes will rely on. All students take basic production, writing, and knowledge courses.

# Liberal Arts

- We must question the effectiveness of all liberal arts courses. Does history and English teach students to find new information and write that information in an academic paper? If they do not, do we need to teach it? If we do, why have liberal arts?
- Communication courses need to find a way to accept that they are a field of liberal arts, part of the trivium, and that liberal arts thinking deserves a place even in professional courses.
- How can the liberal arts prepare our students for upper division work?

# Advanced Courses

- Journalists need to have stronger production skills, production students need to have stronger art and engineering skills, and everyone needs to be able to take an idea, develop a thesis, argue the thesis, and make that a piece of media, no matter what the field.
- Many PR and AD professionals now need production skills, while production professionals often require an understanding of persuasion.

The industry demands proven skill sets. Students need broad skills that are finished: industry is less likely to train today than in years past.