



FROM RADIO TO THE INTERNET:
CHURCH USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

LEADERS of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have proactively adopted and made use of media—both print and electronic—as means to achieve the Church’s organizational purposes. In the Latter-day Saint worldview, these media-related activities are not only practical and prudent but also religious in nature. The very existence of electronic media is considered providential with divinely appointed purposes. According to this view, God has inspired the invention of communications technologies in these latter days, and there is a God-given commission and responsibility to use them in furthering the work of the Church. Speaking of an older technology, the telegraph, President Brigham Young said, “We should bring into requisition every improvement which our age affords, to facilitate our intercourse and to render our inter-communication more easy.”¹

Sherry Pack Baker is an associate professor of communications at Brigham Young University. Elizabeth Mott is a doctoral student of American religious history at Claremont Graduate University.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

The zeal with which the Church uses media can best be understood within this combined prudential and providential framework. The belief that “we *should* bring into requisition every improvement which our age affords” suggests media use to spread the gospel is not only a wise and efficacious thing to do but also a commandment from the Lord. President David O. McKay said, for example, “The Lord has given us the means of whispering through space, of annihilating distance. We have the means in our hands of reaching the millions in the world. . . . We’re in the business of broadcasting to learn how to use it to further the work of the Lord.”² President Spencer W. Kimball said, “The Lord is anxious to put into our hands inventions of which we laymen have hardly a glimpse. . . . Our Father in Heaven has now provided us mighty towers—radio and television towers, with possibilities beyond comprehension—to help fulfill the words of the Lord that ‘the sound must go forth from this place unto all the world.’”³

This chapter reviews the Church’s history of the use of electronic media in the twentieth century. It places landmark events within the framework of the administrations of each Church President who presided over them. It identifies a philosophy and foundational principles and strategies that emerged in the first stages of the Church’s use of broadcast media early in the twentieth century that have affected all subsequent Church efforts in broadcasting and electronic communications. It also looks to the future and identifies a new strategy and principle that has emerged in the twenty-first century in response to the Internet environment.

RELIGION AND MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

Scholars have taken an interest in the matter of the adoption and use of media by organized religions. In the book *Communication and Change in American Religious History*, Leonard I. Sweet discusses the “interplay in American history between the emergence of new communication forms and religious and social change.”⁴ He cites scholars such as Averil Cameron, Roger Finke, and Rodney Stark, who concluded that “those religious leaders who have made the biggest advances have been those who worked out

of their tradition to express their faith through innovative ways and means, idioms and technologies accessible and adapted to the times in which they lived.”⁵ Sweet also cites Colin Morris’s book on Christian communications, which suggests that “many of the exciting new twists in the Christian story over the centuries have occurred because advocates for Christianity have exploited developments in communications technology.”⁶ Further, Sweet refers to historian Nathan Hatch, who has written that success in America’s religious marketplace is explained by “the ability of religious groups to adopt and adapt to the democratic and populist impulses of American culture, and to use popular forms of communication to reach the widest possible audience.”⁷ Conversely, mainline Protestantism, which made excellent use of print technology throughout its history, did not successfully adapt to and exploit broadcast technologies.⁸

While there is no well-developed theory of media and religion, this observation of the relationship between the successful use of communications technologies and the success of organized religions is worth consideration. This relationship is consistent with the views of communications theorists like Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and Walter Ong. They held, according to Sweet, that “communications structures are more than mediums of transmission” in that they affect “every nook and cranny of society, including the intellectual and social girders that underpin that society.”⁹ This view is summarized by Marshall McLuhan’s well-known statement that “the medium is the message.”¹⁰ This means essentially that “communications media themselves, apart from their content and programming, are dynamic and even determinative forces. The medium changes and shapes history and culture; it creates and alters perceptions of reality and truth.”¹¹

In a related view, Neil Postman has argued that “technological change is not additive; it is ecological,” adding, “What happens if we place a drop of red dye into a beaker of clear water? Do we have clear water plus a spot of red dye? Obviously not. We have a new coloration to every molecule of water. That is what I mean by ecological.”¹² Postman had argued earlier: “One significant change generates total change. . . . A new technology does

A FIRM FOUNDATION

not add or subtract something. It changes everything. . . . After television, the United States was not America plus television; television gave a new coloration to every political campaign, to every home, to every school, to every church, to every industry.”¹³ Consistent with this ecological view is James B. Allen’s observation that older Latter-day Saints living in the year 2000 experienced “a different Church than they had known 50 years earlier”¹⁴—not the same church plus new technologies but a different church.

The assumption of the centrality of communications media to the success of religions is a useful backdrop to any narrative about use of the media, and about the progress of the LDS Church in the twentieth century. The following chronology briefly outlines major events in Church use of broadcast media in the administrations of Church Presidents, beginning with Heber J. Grant. This chronology confirms historian Leonard J. Arrington’s observation that “at every stage of our history, the leaders of the Latter-day Saints have sought to use every communication facility that civilization afforded.”¹⁵

HEBER J. GRANT, 1918–45

Church broadcast history begins with Heber J. Grant, who became President of the Church in 1918 at almost the precise historical moment that commercial radio burst upon the scene. The Church began experimenting with radio in its very earliest stages and was among the first organizations to receive a broadcast license.

In 1920, the same year in which KDKA, the first commercial radio station, began broadcasting in Pittsburgh, the *Deseret News* began nightly wireless news flashes in Salt Lake City. In 1921, the Latter-day Saints University received the first US broadcast license issued to an educational institution, and in 1922 the school station broadcast the first Tabernacle organ concert.

On May 6, 1922, the station that later became KSL was dedicated, with President Grant giving the dedicatory address from a tin shack on the roof of the *Deseret News* Building. Thus began radio broadcasting in the Church and in the region. It was “the first full time commercial broadcasting

From Radio to the Internet

operation between the Mississippi Valley and the Pacific Coast.”¹⁶ A year later, the first successful radio broadcast from the Tabernacle was of a speech by US President Warren G. Harding, and the first radio broadcast of portions of general conference also took place.

The Church began almost immediately to be a producer of radio programming. For example, the “Church Hour”—a series of Sunday evening programs—began in 1924. This was before the national radio networks had been established (NBC in 1926 and CBS in 1927). In 1928, the half-hour weekly program *Sunday Evening on Temple Square* began. In 1929, KSL radio affiliated with NBC, and on July 15 the Tabernacle Choir began its weekly network radio broadcasts.

By 1933, KSL-AM had become one of the first Federal Communications Commission (FCC) class 1-A clear-channel stations, transmitting at 50,000 watts—the maximum allowable power. Also by that date, KSL Radio had changed its affiliation from NBC to CBS. President Grant took advantage of other opportunities to reach national audiences as well. For example, in 1935 he spoke on *The Church of the Air*, a national Sunday-morning radio program produced by Columbia Broadcasting Company.

Also in 1935, the Church Radio, Publicity, and Mission Literature Committee was organized with Gordon B. Hinckley as its executive secretary and day-to-day director. Most members are familiar with the story of Gordon B. Hinckley’s visit to the Church Office Building shortly after returning from his mission to report on the need for literature to support the missionary effort.¹⁷ This meeting resulted in his being hired by the Church, his appointment to the Radio Committee, and his subsequent influence on Church media from 1935 until his death in 2008. The organization of this committee is also of note because it is one marker of President Grant’s recognition of the importance of outreach and publicity efforts in improving the image of the Church in the early twentieth century. Under his direction, the Church made full use of radio technology. In 1936, portions of general conference were broadcast to Europe through international shortwave radio; in 1938, *The Fulness of Times* series of half-hour radio programs produced

A FIRM FOUNDATION

by Gordon B. Hinckley was broadcast in the United States, Canada, South Africa, Sweden, and New Zealand. This series continued until 1942.

The Tabernacle Choir participated in the first overseas broadcast to the British Isles through the US Army Special Services radio network in 1944, and in 1945 the choir performed on the nationwide radio broadcast of the memorial service for President Franklin D. Roosevelt.¹⁸ This is one example of the many instances in which the choir sang on radio and television at the deaths or inaugurations of US presidents throughout the twentieth century.

These events during the Grant administration demonstrate some of the ways in which radio both reflected and contributed to the Church's transition from a history of ridicule and isolation in the West to a respected participant in the national and international experience.

President Grant died in May of 1945 after serving for nearly twenty-seven years. Ronald W. Walker wrote that President Grant commanded "the national media unlike any other contemporary Utahn."¹⁹ As the Church's broadcasting pioneers, Grant and his administration created the foundation for all subsequent media activities, accomplishments, and successes throughout the twentieth century. Due in part to the longevity of his tenure as the President of the Church at the key moment of the dawn of broadcasting, Heber J. Grant and his administration were able to develop a philosophy and foundational principles and strategies, affecting all subsequent Church efforts in broadcasting and electronic communications:

- Early adoption of new media technologies by the Church
- Church ownership of media outlets
- Church production of media content
- Use of media to create a favorable image of the Church
- Use of electronic media to reach and communicate with Church members
- Use of electronic media to introduce and explain the Church to those not of our faith
- Establishment of and enduring commitment to Tabernacle Choir broadcasts

From Radio to the Internet

- Use of the Tabernacle Choir for Church public relations purposes in media and in mediated national and international events
- Establishment and development of the Church as a broadcast entity

GEORGE ALBERT SMITH, 1945–51

George Albert Smith became President of the Church at the end of World War II. He delivered the first Church sermon by shortwave radio to servicemen in Japan in 1946. He served his presidency during the postwar years in which television emerged and began its rapid development. President Smith presided over the first live general conference broadcast over commercial television in 1948.²⁰ He presided also over the Church's adoption of television when KSL-TV, the first commercial TV station in Utah, went on the air in June 1949 and presided over the first live local broadcast of general conference on KSL television in October.²¹ That year *Music and the Spoken Word* was first broadcast on television.²²

It is interesting to note that the Church had only about one million members when it began television broadcasting in 1949, having reached that milestone in 1947.²³ Membership numbers become significant if one is looking for evidence of a correlation between use of media technology and Church growth during the twentieth century.

DAVID O. MCKAY, 1951–70

President David O. McKay's administration was proactive in making use of all available media, including telephone wire transmissions, videotape, commercial and shortwave radio, television and film, and even satellite. His administration took place right in the heart of the age of mass media that many consider to be synonymous with the period known as modernism. While the groundbreaking pioneers had set the stage, it was up to President McKay to see that Church broadcasting became viable.

Gregory A. Prince and William Robert Wright wrote, "When David O. McKay became president in 1951, he inherited a nascent broadcasting

A FIRM FOUNDATION

apparatus with largely unrealized potential. Gradually he moved to unleash that potential.”²⁴ They added, “Clean-shaven, immaculately dressed, and movie-star handsome, McKay immediately caught the attention of member and nonmember alike, and held it.”²⁵ Francis M. Gibbons wrote, “This new mass communications medium . . . seemed tailor-made for the appearance, personality, and dominating presence of President David O. McKay.”²⁶

General conference was televised outside of the Intermountain area for first time in October 1953,²⁷ marking the expansion of the Church’s broadcasting footprint as it moved into the second half of the century. In 1954, President McKay oversaw the development of film production facilities at Brigham Young University, thus moving the Church deeply into that medium.²⁸

Of significance to future events is that President McKay kept Gordon B. Hinckley on as head of the Radio Committee. Then in 1958, McKay called Hinckley to be an Assistant to the Twelve and in 1961 called him to be an Apostle.

The decade of the 1960s was important for the expansion of Church media use, as well as for the development of satellite technologies. Early in the 1960s, the Church moved even further into broadcast ownership through the development of radio and television properties at Brigham Young University. In 1960, KBYU-FM began broadcasting, and in 1962, BYU acquired the Provo station KLOR-TV and changed the call letters to KBYU-TV.²⁹ The establishment of Church-owned broadcasting properties at BYU was an important strategic move that has had deep implications for the Church and for BYU—and continues to have far-reaching effects due to the launch of BYU-TV International in 2007.³⁰

In 1962, the Church’s April general conference was broadcast on television nationwide for the first time. July 1962 marked the dawn of the satellite age. That was the date that the first worldwide satellite broadcast of a live television program took place over the recently launched Telstar 1 satellite (owned by AT&T and flown by NASA).³¹ Viewership of the program was reportedly about three hundred million people.³² “Featured on the program

From Radio to the Internet

were excerpts from a baseball game in Chicago, a live news conference by President John F. Kennedy, and a concert by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, singing from Mt. Rushmore.”³³

In October 1962, the live telecast of *Music and the Spoken Word* debuted, reaching over eight hundred radio and television stations worldwide.³⁴ Also in 1962, the Church purchased five international shortwave radio transmitters from a New York shortwave radio station, with the objective of communicating with Church members in Europe and South America.³⁵ But new and more effective technologies were soon to make themselves available.

In 1963, the Church reached the two million mark in membership. This was only sixteen years after it had reached the one million mark in 1947. By way of comparison, that initial million member milestone (in 1947) had taken 117 years to accomplish, beginning with the foundation of the Church in 1830. Membership growth continued to accelerate.

In 1964, Bonneville International Corporation was created with Arch Madsen as president and Gordon B. Hinckley as a vice president. Bonneville was created to consolidate Church-owned commercial broadcasting stations and operations. With this action the Church truly became a permanently committed and established media entity.³⁶

In October of 1965, general conference was first heard live in Europe. KBYU-TV began broadcasting in 1965, and it later became affiliated with the Public Broadcasting System.³⁷

In 1967, some radio and TV stations in Mexico started carrying general conference,³⁸ and 1968 marked the first general conference satellite broadcast to South America.³⁹

President McKay died in January of 1970. He served as President of the Church for nineteen years. Prince and Wright wrote of President McKay, “Under his leadership, the church experienced unparalleled growth, nearly tripling in total membership and becoming a significant presence throughout the world.”⁴⁰ Surely the media contributed to that presence.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH, 1970–72

There were no major broadcasting events to make note of during President Joseph Fielding Smith's administration, although the reconfiguration of all the Church magazines in January 1971 dramatically changed the landscape in terms of the Church's print media. This was the year in which the first issues of the *Friend*, the *New Era*, and the *Ensign* were published (replacing several previous Church publications). It also was the year in which Church membership reached three million.

HAROLD B. LEE, 1972–73

Some landmark communications events took place during President Harold B. Lee's short administration. These included the beginnings of the Bonneville production of the *Homefront* series, which eventually won several prestigious awards, including back-to-back Emmy awards in 1997 and 1998.⁴¹ President Lee also presided over the establishment of the Church's Public Affairs Department, which included divisions for news and information and for electronic media. Gordon B. Hinckley also was deeply involved with this initiative to present the "Church's image more professionally."⁴²

SPENCER W. KIMBALL, 1973–85

The Church moved aggressively with its media use and strategy during President Spencer W. Kimball's administration. During the early years of his administration, upon the recommendation of Gordon B. Hinckley,⁴³ all the Church-owned shortwave radio properties purchased since 1962 were sold because they were not meeting their objectives.

In the 1970s, the Church was involved in a diverse variety of media-related activities. In 1976, it produced an hour-long TV special *The Family . . . and Other Living Things*,⁴⁴ which aired in the US and Canada. By 1977, general conference broadcasts were reaching all of the US, Latin America, Australia, the Philippines, and parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia.⁴⁵ Also by 1977, the Church owned sixteen radio and television stations, an

From Radio to the Internet

international broadcast distribution system, a Washington news bureau, a cable TV system, and production and consulting divisions.⁴⁶ Bonneville Entertainment Inc. was organized in 1977 to produce films and television features but was later dissolved in 1982.⁴⁷ In 1978, President Kimball addressed the first Churchwide closed-circuit meeting for women in the Tabernacle on Temple Square. The meeting was broadcast via satellite to meetinghouses throughout the world, as were general priesthood meetings.⁴⁸

By 1978, just seven years after the previous million-member landmark, Church membership reached four million.

In the 1980s, the Church entered one of the most important periods in its broadcast and electronic media history—the satellite era. President Kimball’s administration made a substantial investment and commitment to satellite technology during this decade. In March 1980, the Bonneville Satellite Corporation was formed.⁴⁹ Then in April, the Church’s first satellite broadcast in conjunction with general conference occurred in commemoration of the Church’s sesquicentennial celebration. During this broadcast, President Kimball dedicated the reconstructed Peter Whitmer Sr. log home on the original site in Fayette, New York.⁵⁰ That event is a significant marker not only for the Church’s 150th anniversary but also for its progress in its adoption of media technologies—from the single-pull press⁵¹ that was used to print the first copies of the Book of Mormon in 1830 to the satellite delivery of general conference in 1980.

The step into satellite technology was one of the ways in which President Kimball’s administration “lengthened the stride” of the Church.⁵² In January 1981, the Tabernacle Choir participated in the inaugural festivities for US President Ronald Reagan, and Gordon B. Hinckley was called by President Kimball in July to serve as a third counselor in the First Presidency. That same year the Church installed a satellite station in City Creek Canyon, three and a half miles from downtown Salt Lake City, and began installing satellite receivers in stake centers throughout Utah.⁵³ In October the Church announced that it would create a network of five hundred satellite dishes to be placed at stake centers outside of Utah, linking Church

A FIRM FOUNDATION

headquarters with members throughout the United States and Canada. One newspaper reported that this was the world's largest network via satellite at that time and that the order placed for the satellites had been the largest single order for a single television network.⁵⁴

President Hinckley was deeply involved in this satellite initiative. His biography by Sheri L. Dew reports:

This development was particularly gratifying to him [Hinckley] as he had, with Bonneville executives, for years investigated various technologies to develop just such a network. . . . Of that experience he said, "As I learned what a satellite and a transponder were, how far above the earth they would orbit, that they worked through the conversion of sunlight to electricity through voltaic cells, and so forth, I got the picture. I could envision the tremendous impact a network of satellites would have on our people. This was the culmination of years of effort in trying to find a way to communicate with our members."⁵⁵

In 1982, the new satellite system was used for the first time for a Church-wide youth fireside, with President Hinckley speaking.

EZRA TAFT BENSON, 1985–94

A wide variety of broadcasting and electronic media events took place during the Benson administration. In 1988, the National Interfaith Cable Coalition, of which the Church was a founding member, launched the Vision Interfaith Satellite Network (VISN) which carried several Church programs and specials.⁵⁶

In January 1989, "eight large city television stations in the United States [began] airing *Together Forever*, a program produced by the Church. Within four months of this event, every commercial station in the United States where mission headquarters [were] located [had broadcast] the program."⁵⁷ Also in January, the Tabernacle Choir performed at the inaugural events for President George H. W. Bush, who called the choir a "National Treasure."⁵⁸

From Radio to the Internet

In February, President Hinckley spoke at the Church's first fireside broadcast by satellite for single-adult members.⁵⁹ In December, Church membership was reported to be seven million, and by 1990 more than 2,500 Church satellite dishes in North America were able to receive general conference.⁶⁰

The Church also was responsive to the emerging computer age. In 1991, Church records were completely digitized.⁶¹ Also in 1991, the Church Audiovisual Department was formed. This consolidated all Church-owned audiovisual facilities and production efforts,⁶² and control of the BYU Motion Picture Studio also passed to this department.⁶³ In 1991, Church membership reached eight million. In October 1992, "*On the Way Home*, a Church video production, premiered over the Church satellite network as part of missionary open houses held in Church meetinghouses throughout North America."⁶⁴

HOWARD W. HUNTER, 1994–95

President Howard W. Hunter engaged in a first-ever event; he addressed the full-time missionaries via satellite.⁶⁵ Also during his tenure, a Church-produced Public Affairs radio program called *Music and Values* won a 1994 Gabriel Award.⁶⁶

GORDON B. HINCKLEY, 1995–2008

One of the most unique characteristics of media-related events in President Hinckley's administration was his own presence in the media—in news conferences and in public appearances and interview shows. Due to the focus of this chapter, however, only a few key events in the Church's institutional use of the media during President Hinckley's tenure will be highlighted. These events will exemplify the continuing reach and expansion of broadcast media and also the beginnings of the Church's entry into the Internet age. The events mentioned here do not begin to convey the full reach of President Hinckley's contributions to Church media innovations

A FIRM FOUNDATION

because his administration also stretched well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

As an example of the wide variety of issues and concerns the Church dealt with during President Hinckley's administration in its role as a media entity, in 1995 alone, the first year of his presidency, KSL-TV switched its affiliation to NBC after forty-five years with CBS, the Church began broadcasting a series of worldwide missionary firesides via satellite,⁶⁷ and the *Church News* went online at ldschurchnews.com.⁶⁸ These three events alone touch on the Church's use of media in traditional broadcasting, satellite, and Internet.

A year later, in December 1996, the Church's official website lds.org was launched.⁶⁹ This event was the official and landmark beginning of the Internet age for the Church.

In 1997, PBS aired *Ancestors*, a ten-part series on family history produced by KBYU-TV, an example of the continuing importance of Church involvement in television content.⁷⁰

In 1999 (May 24), the genealogy website familysearch.org was launched and was immediately successful and popular.⁷¹

At the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, broadcasting was still very important to the Church. In 1999, Bonneville International Corporation holdings included seventeen radio and television stations, and in the year 2000, BYU-Television began broadcasting nationally 24/7 on the DISH Network satellite system, allowing people across the United States and southern Canada to pick up the station. By the end of the year, BYU-TV was available in about seventeen million homes because by then it was being carried by cable companies and DirecTV.⁷²

The Church's entry into the Internet age during President Hinckley's administration was a fitting culmination to his career after all he had done in every other media format throughout the history of the Church's adoption, acquisition, and use of electronic media. President Hinckley was involved for nearly the whole journey, except for the first twelve years of radio. He worked in and was a driving force in Church media matters for

From Radio to the Internet

seventy-three years. He epitomized the zeal by which Church leaders and their administrations adopted electronic media in sharing the message of the restored gospel.

CONCLUSION

This conclusion focuses on four succinct points. First, the four Church Presidents covered in this brief history who held office for the longest tenures were positioned at precise periods in media emergence and development to make use of those new technologies for Church purposes: Heber J. Grant during the radio era, David O. McKay during the mass media era of TV and film, Spencer W. Kimball during the satellite era, and Gordon B. Hinckley during the height of all of the traditional electronic media and the dawn of the Internet era.

Second, as discussed above, theorists have attributed the success of organized religions in part to their ability to adopt and make use of emerging media. Church leadership must have anticipated the positive effects to be achieved from media adoption, ownership, use, and production, or they would not have invested so much time and treasure in their development. The Church was successful in adopting and making use of media in the twentieth century, and it also was successful in terms of growth in membership. These issues have been juxtaposed in this discussion, but are they truly related? To the authors' knowledge, the possible effects of Church media use on growth in membership during the twentieth century have not been studied systematically and analytically. In order to approach this question, a variety of studies and analyses are needed. For example, what can be documented about the effect on Church growth of the aggressive move into satellite technology in the 1980s, both within the United States and in other countries? Or of the use of television and film in the 1960s and '70s? Such analyses would need to include also comparative studies with other religions relating to their media use and membership increase (or decrease) during the twentieth century.

Third, this brief history and the time line⁷³ on which it is based provide only a skeleton around which full histories beg to be written. There

A FIRM FOUNDATION

are fascinating stories to be told about every media innovation and event highlighted in these chronologies. The content, personalities, historical circumstances, obstacles, and conflicts (technological, financial, institutional, organizational, and interpersonal) that surrounded each of these events should be documented. The subject matter of this chapter (the Church's use of electronic media in the twentieth century) deserves careful and close examination in all of its aspects, just as historians have so carefully studied all issues relating to nineteenth-century Mormon print media issues.

Finally, with regard to the past, this chapter began with the theoretical assumption that changes in communications technologies are ecological. They affect everything. The academic study of twentieth-century Mormonism has only just begun. One key element and common thread that will need to run through these studies will be a consideration of the ways in which things changed in Mormondom as new media technologies were introduced. What were those changes, and how did they make the institutional Church and the experience of being a Mormon different than they previously had been?

SPECULATION ABOUT THE FUTURE

In September 2000, Church membership reached eleven million with more than half the members being non-English speakers.⁷⁴ This demographic in itself raises important questions about how the Church will and should make the best use of all forms of media in the twenty-first century.

If indeed the past is prologue, one can anticipate that the Church will continue to embrace new media, whatever they might look like in the coming years. One evidence of the Church's continued commitment to media in the twenty-first century is that it has entered headlong into the Internet with its websites (lds.org, mormon.org, familysearch.org), its Internet radio (radio.lds.org), and its presence on YouTube (youtube.com/mormonmessages).

The twenty-first century presents the Church with an entirely different communications environment. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the strategies that were developed and that endured throughout the twentieth

From Radio to the Internet

century will continue to guide future media activities: early adoption of new media technologies, Church ownership of media outlets, Church production of media content, use of the media to create a favorable image of the Church, use of electronic media to reach and communicate with Church members, and use of electronic media to introduce and explain the Church to those not of our faith.

But the twenty-first century also saw a new media principle and strategy that departs dramatically from the past. Much of the Church's focus in the twentieth century for both print and broadcast media initiatives was to control its own message. The new principle, introduced in the twenty-first century in response to the new media environment, is for individual members to use the Internet to help the Church achieve its purposes. Elder M. Russell Ballard made this clear in his graduation speech at BYU–Hawaii in December 2007. He said on that occasion:

There are conversations going on about the Church constantly. Those conversations will continue whether or not we choose to participate in them. But we cannot stand on the sidelines while others, including our critics, attempt to define what the Church teaches. While some conversations have audiences in the thousands or even millions, most are much, much smaller. But all conversations have an impact on those who participate in them. Perceptions of the Church are established one conversation at a time. The challenge is that there are too many people participating in conversation about the Church for our Church personnel to converse with and respond to individually. We cannot answer every question, satisfy every inquiry, and respond to every inaccuracy that exists. . . . *May I ask that you join the conversation by participating on the Internet, particularly the New Media, to share the gospel and to explain in simple, clear terms the message of the Restoration.*⁷⁵

The ultimate effects of this strategy, as well as of the Church's own new media initiatives and activities, are only beginning to unfold. The Internet

A FIRM FOUNDATION

has changed the world even more dramatically than did the radio, film, broadcast, and satellite technologies of the twentieth century. How it will change the Church and its members remains to be seen.

NOTES

1. Brigham Young, "Circular Letter of Instruction," November 9, 1865, in Leonard J. Arrington, "The Deseret Telegraph—A Church-Owned Public Utility," *Journal of Economic History* 11, no. 2 (1951): 122, 118.
2. Gregory A. Prince and Wm. Robert Wright, *David O. McKay and the Rise of Modern Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), 124, 127.
3. Spencer W. Kimball, "When the World Will Be Converted," *Ensign*, October 1974, 10.
4. Leonard I. Sweet, *Communication and Change in American Religious History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 1.
5. Sweet, *Communication and Change*, 2.
6. Colin Morris, *Wrestling with an Angel: Reflections on Christian Communications* (London: Collins, 1990), 63–64, in Sweet, *Communication and Change*, 2.
7. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), in Sweet, *Communication and Change*, 2.
8. Sweet, *Communication and Change*, 61.
9. Sweet, *Communication and Change*, 50.
10. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), 7.
11. Sherry Baker, "Mormon Media History Timeline, 1827–2007," *BYU Studies* 47, no. 4 (2008): 118.
12. Neil Postman, "Five Things We Need to Know about Technological Change," Proceedings of the New Technologies and the Human Person: Communicating the Faith in the New Millennium Conference (1998), 5.
13. Neil Postman, *Technopoly: The Surrender of Culture to Technology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 18.
14. James B. Allen, "Technology and the Church: A Steady Revolution," *Church Almanac, 2007* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Morning News), 120.

From Radio to the Internet

15. Leonard J. Arrington, "The Deseret Telegraph," *This People*, January 1989, 53.
16. Wendell J. Ashton, *Voice in the West: Biography of a Pioneer Newspaper* (New York: Duell, Sloan, & Pearce, 1950), 270–72, 407.
17. Sheri L. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith: The Biography of Gordon B. Hinckley* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1996), 85.
18. R. L. Miller, "Mormon Tabernacle Choir," <http://www.media.utah.edu/UHE/m/MORMONTABCHOIR.html>.
19. Walker wrote: "Commanding the national media unlike any other contemporary Utahn, Grant managed to alter long-standing negative stereotypes about Utah and her people. He frequently spoke before influential national groups, personally guided nationally prominent Americans through Utah, boosted Utah's tourism, and quietly assisted sympathetic Hollywood production such as *Union Pacific* and *Brigham Young*. Symptomatic of these public relations efforts, Grant cultivated the friendship of leading national opinion makers and visited U.S. presidents Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in Washington, D.C." "Heber J. Grant," in *Utah History Encyclopedia*, <http://www.media.utah.edu/UHE/g/GRANT,HEBER.html>.
20. Craig K. Manscill, Robert C. Freeman, and Dennis A. Wright, eds., *Presidents of the Church* (Springville, UT: Cedar Fort, 2008), 210.
21. M. Dallas Burnett, "Conferences: General Conferences," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 1:307–8.
22. Lloyd D. Newell, "Seventy-five Years of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's *Music and the Spoken Word*, 1929–2004: A History of the Broadcast of America's Choir," in *Mormon Historical Studies* 5, no. 1 (2004): 135.
23. "Church Growth," <http://www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/membership-in-christ-s-church/church-growth>.
24. Prince and Wright, *Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 124.
25. Prince and Wright, *Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 404.
26. Francis M. Gibbons, *David O. McKay: Apostle to the World, Prophet of God* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986), 329.
27. Gibbons, *David O. McKay*, 329; Lynn Arave, "Historic Moments in LDS Broadcasts," *Deseret News*, April 5, 2002.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

28. David Jacobs, "A History of Motion Pictures Produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1912–1967" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1967).
29. Norman Tarbox, "The History of Public Television in the State of Utah" (PhD diss., University of Utah, 1979), 238. The station remained dark due to construction problems with the antenna, and it took a number of years for KBYU-TV to begin broadcasting in November 1965.
30. "BYU Television International" (2007), http://history.cfac.byu.edu/index.php/BYU_Television_International.
31. "Telstar" (2010), *The Internet Encyclopedia of Science* <http://www.daviddarling.info/encyclopedia/T/Telstar.html>.
32. Prince and Wright, *Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 129.
33. Allen, "Technology and the Church," 136.
34. R. B. Josephson, "Russ Josephson's Salt Lake Mormon Tabernacle Choir Discography" (2005), <http://www.josephsons.org/slmct/mtchist.htm>.
35. Fred C. Esplin, "The Church as Broadcaster," *Dialogue* 10, no. 3 (1977): 25–45.
36. Prince and Wright, *Rise of Modern Mormonism*, 135.
37. Tarbox, "History of Public Television"; O. S. Rich, *BYU Broadcast Education: The Beginning, an Autobiographical Sketch* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1992), 127.
38. Arave, "Historic Moments in LDS Broadcasts."
39. W. Dee Halverson, *Bonneville International Corporation Historical Record, 1922–1992* (Salt Lake City: Heritage Associates), 5.
40. Prince and Wright, *Rise of Modern Mormonism*, front cover flap.
41. Allen, "Technology and the Church," 140.
42. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 318. BYU's application to acquire Provo's KFOR-TV (Channel 11) was accepted by Beehive Broadcasting Co. in March (KFOR-TV had gone bankrupt under its first owners); call letters were changed to KBYU-TV in September. The station was still dark due to construction problems with the antenna, and it took a number of years for KBYU-TV to begin broadcasting in November 1965. Tarbox, "History of Public Television," 238–44.
43. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 283.

From Radio to the Internet

44. Richard O. Cowan, *The Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1985), 290; “Church to Produce Television Special,” *Ensign*, November 1976, 89; Esplin, “The Church as Broadcaster,” 25–45.
45. Victor L. Ludlow, “The Internationalization of the Church,” in *Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 221–22.
46. Esplin, “The Church as Broadcaster,” 25–45.
47. Halverson, *Bonneville International Corporation Historical Record*, 53.
48. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church: An Illustrated Almanac of the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Eagle Gate, 2000), 180.
49. Halverson, *Bonneville International Corporation Historical Record*, 57.
50. Rodney H. Brady, “Bonneville International Corporation,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:132.
51. Steven L. Olsen, “Centennial Observances” (1992), http://www.lightplanet.com/mormons/daily/holidays/Centennial_EOM.htm.
52. Peter Crawley, *A Descriptive Bibliography of the Mormon Church* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1997), 1:30–31; Larry C. Porter, “The Book of Mormon: Historical Setting for Its Translation and Publication,” in *Joseph Smith: The Prophet, the Man*, ed. Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993): 49–64.
53. Edward L. Kimball, *Lengthen Your Stride: The Presidency of Spencer W. Kimball* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005).
54. Allen, “Technology and the Church,” 136.
55. “Mormon Church Establishing World’s Largest Satellite Television Network,” *Evening Independent* (St. Petersburg, Florida), January 22, 1983, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=950&dat=19830122&id=lucLAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=IVkDAAAIAIBAJ&pg=3844,1554068>.
56. Dew, *Go Forward with Faith*, 388.
57. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 181.
58. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 18.
59. Gordon B. Hinckley, “To Young Single Adults,” *Ensign*, June 1989, 72.
60. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 40.

A FIRM FOUNDATION

61. Arave, “Historic Moments in LDS Broadcasts.”
62. Manscill, Freeman, and Wright, *Presidents of the Church*, 367.
63. *Ensign*, June 1992, 79.
64. Peter N. Johnson, “Motion Pictures, LDS Productions,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:964–65.
65. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 207.
66. Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and William W. Slaughter, *Prophets of the Latter Days* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 193.
67. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 221.
68. “Thousands Watch Church Satellite Broadcast,” *Ensign*, May 1996, 109.
69. Russell C. Rasmussen, “Computers and the Internet in the Church,” in *Out of Obscurity: The LDS Church in the Twentieth Century* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 280.
70. Rasmussen, “Computers and the Internet,” 280.
71. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 14.
72. Rasmussen, “Computers and the Internet,” 282; Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 102.
73. Holzapfel and others, *On This Day in the Church*, 6; “New BYUTV Network Widens Reach of LDS, BYU Programs,” *Ensign*, April 1996, 79; Kimberly Demucha, “KBYU Programming to Go National, International” (February 3, 2000), <http://newsnet.byu.edu/story.cfm/7616>; “BYU TV Now Carried on DIRECTV,” *Ensign*, March 1997, 77–78.
74. Terryl L. Givens, *The Latter-day Saint Experience in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004), 314.
75. M. Russell Ballard, “Using New Media to Support the Work of the Church” (2007); emphasis added, <http://newsroom.lds.org/ldsnewsroom/eng/news-releases-stories/using-new-media-to-support-the-work-of-the-church>.