

DIGITAL MEDIA ETHICS

Prepared by Dr. Sherihan Mohamed

Lecture 1

جامعة الجميع الذكية

تسعى لتكون الكيان الأول الذي يتبنى مبدأ المجتمع التعليمي
التعاوني ويقدم العلم مقابل العمل لتنمية وبناء المجتمعات.

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CHABTER 01 – LECTURE1

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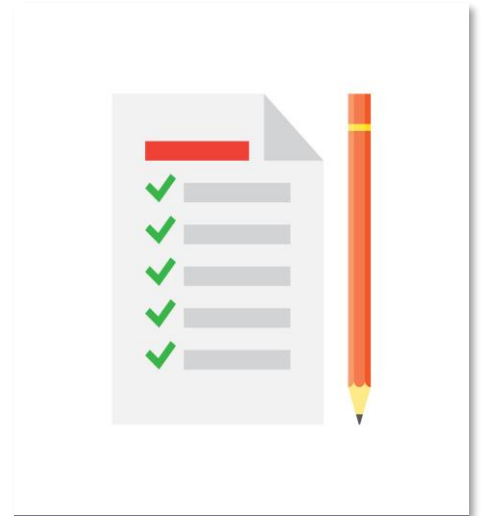
Central Issues in the Ethics of Digital Media

**** Introduction.**

**** (Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:**

1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and Ubiquity.
2. Digital media and “greased information”.
3. Digital media as communication media: fluidity, ubiquity, global scope, and selfhood/identity.

**** Conclusion**



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CHABTER 01 – LECTURE1

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Introduction



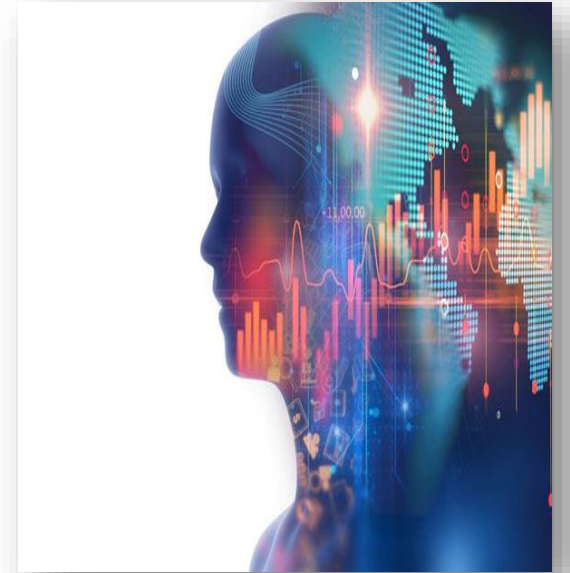
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Most certainly, in the industrialized world, our lives are inextricably interwoven with what are sometimes called “**New Media**” or digital media.

Current generations are sometimes referred to as “**digital natives**” indicating that they have been born into and grown up in a world saturated with these technologies.

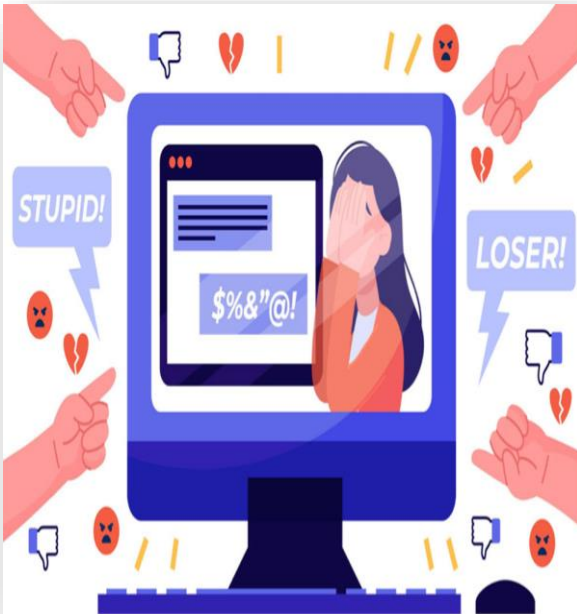
An influential European Commission “Digital Futures” used the term “On-life” for its project, as developed by information philosopher Luciano Floridi (2015) to highlight how the once distinct domains of “life online” and “life offline” are now (more or less) seamlessly interwoven in an “Onlife”.



Introduction

Contemporary media coverage of digital media frequently highlights important, often frightening, Ethical issues these entanglements entail.

Beyond our opening examples of **cyberbullying** and “**trial by Internet**”, it is easy to find stories highlighting how violence in games appears to lead to horrific, real-world violence, ranging from school shootings to the July 22, 2011, killings in Norway, including 69 young people on the island of Utøya.



***Similarly,** the longstanding debate over whether pornography consumption results in increased sexual aggression, especially toward women and girls, continues.

***More broadly,** numerous episodes and developments have forced attention to how our immersion in digital media technologies renders us vulnerable to massive state and corporate surveillance and manipulation.

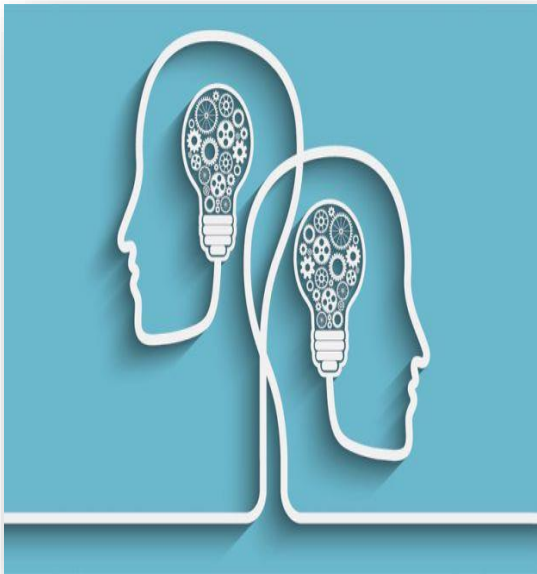


Introduction



These are certainly critical ethical issues, ones that will only become more complex and pressing as our digital environment continues to expand and evolve.

Most obviously, through ever greater collection and analysis of our personal data in so-called Big Data approaches that will be fed ever more data about us in the emerging Internet of Things.



So we begin by examining more carefully some of the important characteristics of digital media, along with the specific sorts of ethical issues that these characteristics often raise for us.

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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

Chapter 01

(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

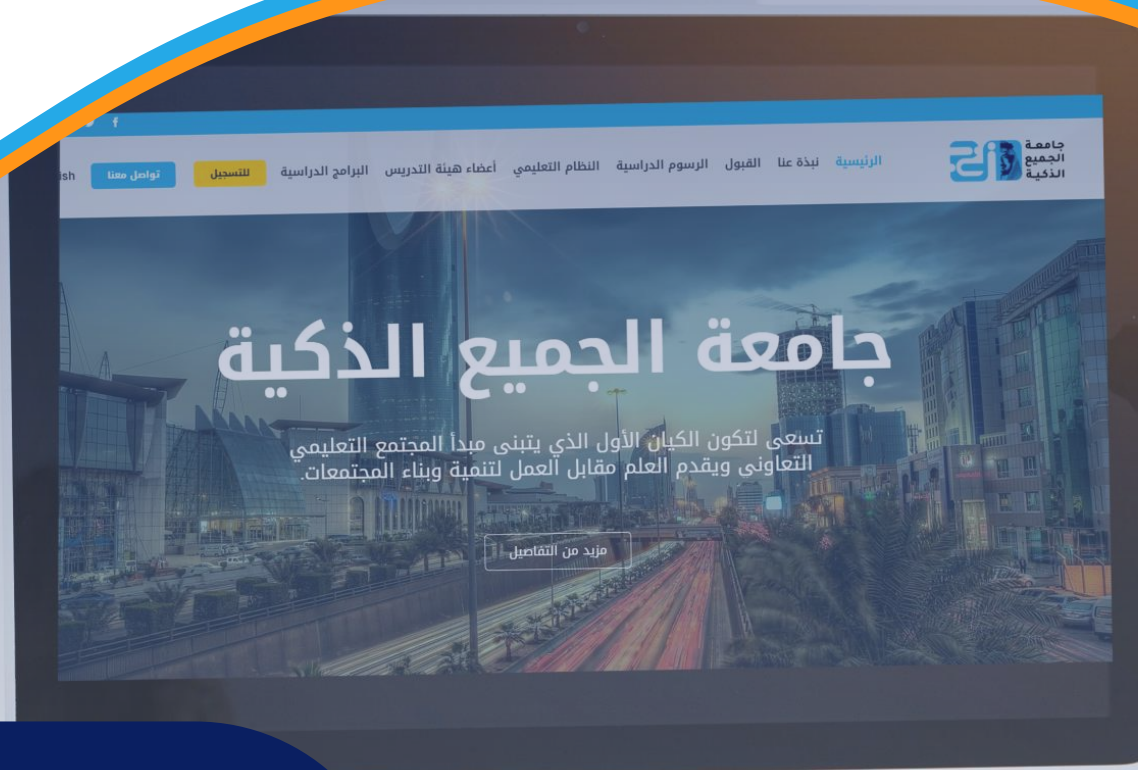
Digital media, analogue media:
convergence and Ubiquity.

Digital media and
“greased information”.

Digital media as communication
media: fluidity, ubiquity, global
scope, and selfhood/identity.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)
digital age:

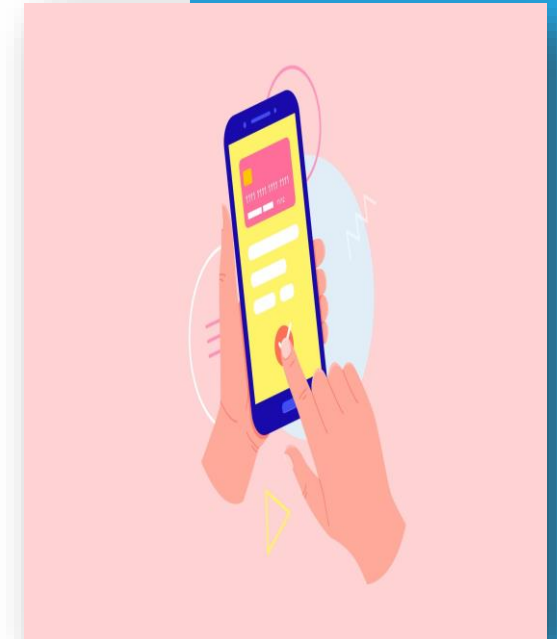
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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

A largely **optimistic assumption** that **new technologies** would make our lives better in many ways.

As consumers satisfied with the latest convenience of, say, a voice activated digital assistant or smart home, and/or as citizens in a world of increasing individual and collective freedom, democracy, is increasingly overshadowed by darker developments.

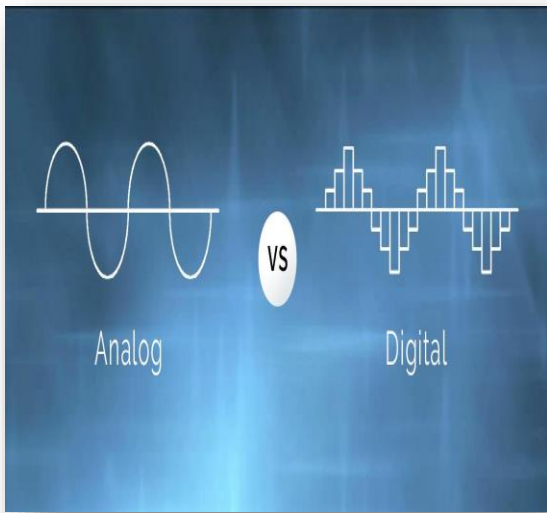


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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

To be clear: “**post-digital**” does not mean “anti digital”.

It signals, rather, a broader shift from an exclusive focus on “**the digital**” – to the exclusion of “**the analogue**” – to a more nuanced balance and recognition of the roles and importance of each in our lives.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

Namely, **do digital media present us with radically new kinds of ethical problems that thereby require absolutely new ethical approaches?**

Such questions are often driven by emphasizing instead important differences between earlier media and digital media.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:



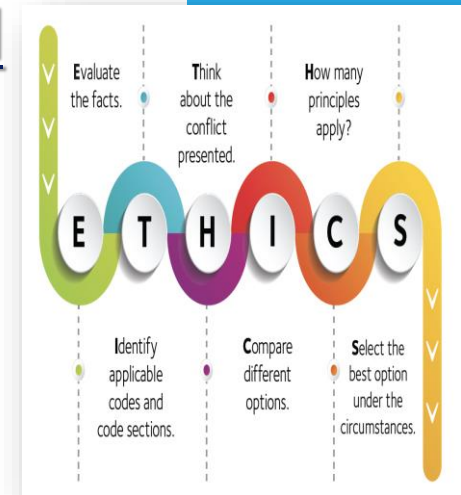
Such an emphasis, however, also drives the either/or approach underlying much popular media reporting. In any event.

these differences often are part of why new ethical issues come up in conjunction with digital media. Exploring these differences at the outset is hence a good starting point.

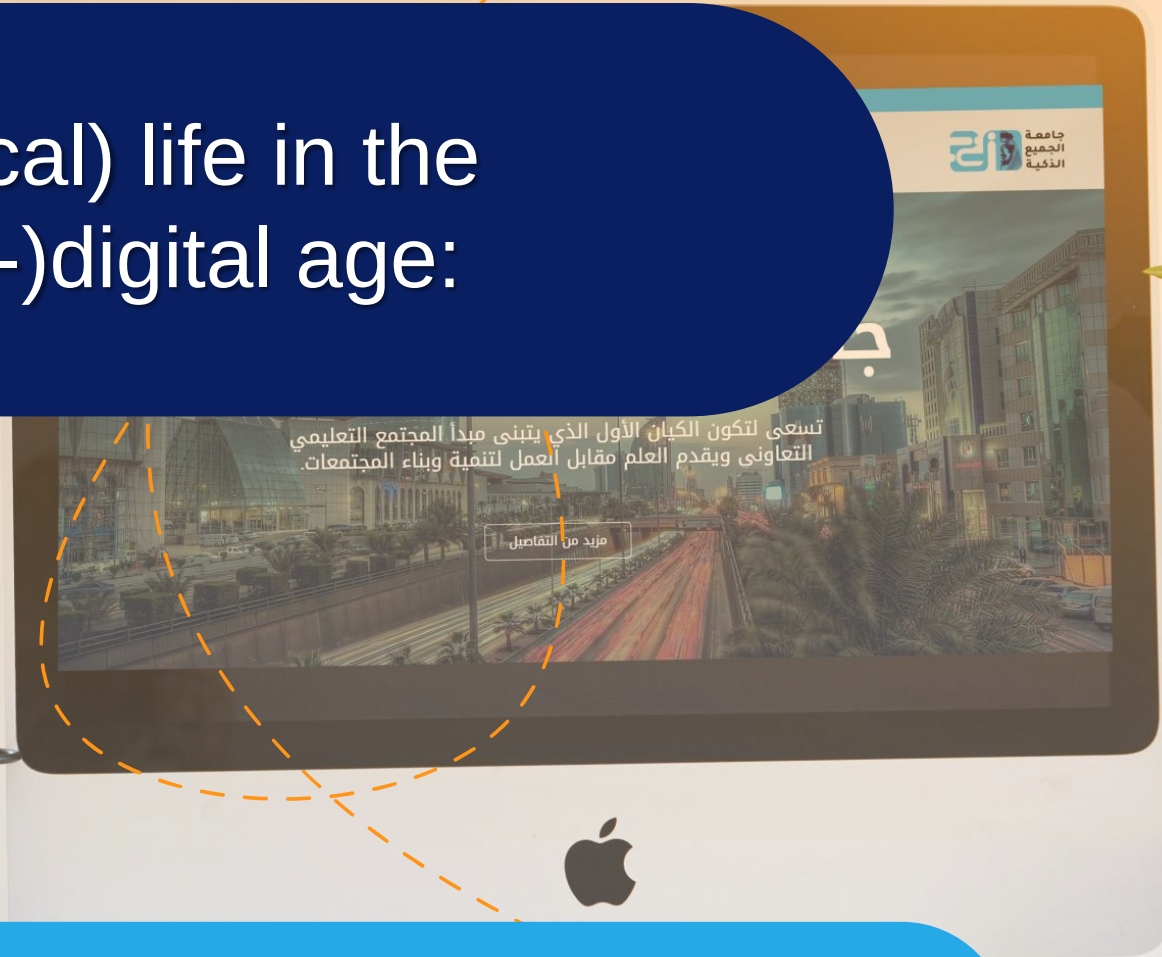
Three especially relevant characteristics of digital

media are:

- (1) how digital media foster convergence.
- (2) digital information as “greased”.
- (3) digital media as ubiquitous and global communication media.



(Ethical) life in the
(post-)digital age:



Digital media, Analogue media



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1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

To begin with, digital media work by transforming extant into the basic informational elements of electronic computers and networks, using binary code (1s and 0s – bits on and off).

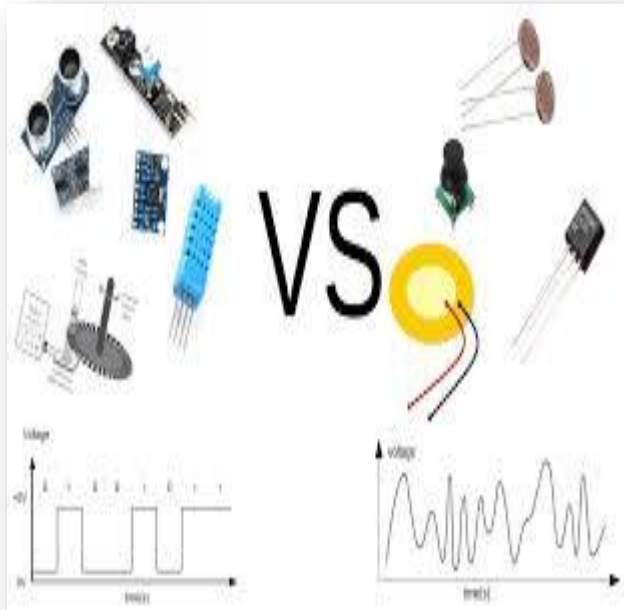
By contrast, analogue media, such as increasingly popular vinyl records, capture, store, and make information accessible by producing specific material artifacts that are like (analogous to) the original.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

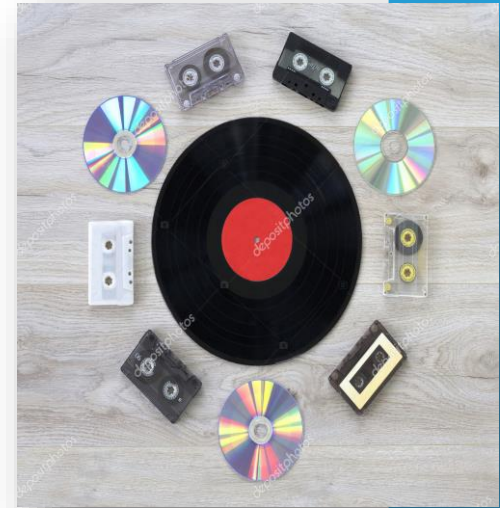


One of the reasons digital media are so attractive is that analogue media, by contrast, always involve some loss of information across the various processes of collecting, recording, and storing it.

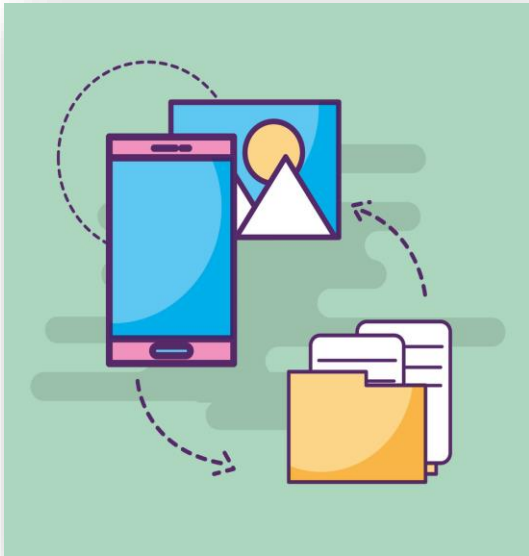
1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

This means – and this is particularly critical to the ethical discussions of copying – that each analogue copy of an original is always less true to the original.

And the more copies that are made – e.g., a tape copy of a record as a copy of a tape of an original performance – the less faithful (and satisfying) the resulting copy will be.



1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:



To be sure, these distinctions between analogue and digital media are only one side of the coin. As advocates of the post-digital remind us, however much our media technologies have changed in recent decades, the human eyes, ears, and voices have not.

1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

We as **embodied beings** still generate and receive information in **resolutely analogue form**.

The digital codes, for example, that pass between two computers or smartphones, whether in the form of a Skype call, Facebook update, or phone call, begin and end for their human users as analogue information.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

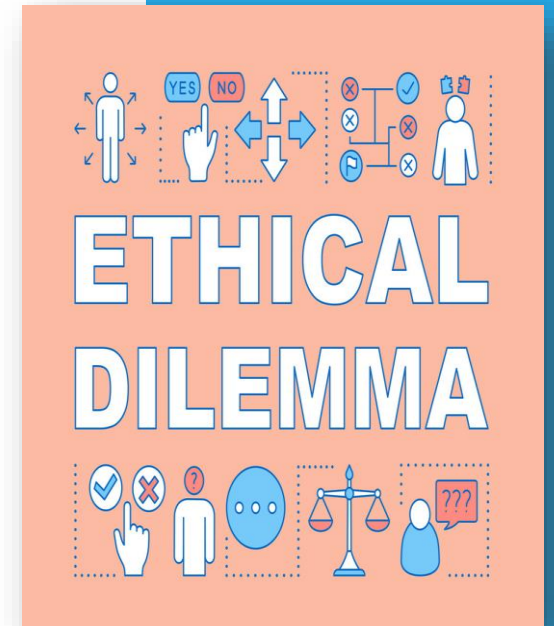


The ethical experiences and challenges of digital media are so strikingly new that they **Require** entirely new frameworks.

But these continuities with our experiences as analogue and embodied beings argue that **the emergence of digital media Does not require** us to throw out all previous ethical reflections and views and somehow try to start from the beginning.

1. Digital media, analogue media: convergence and ubiquity:

On the contrary, we will see several examples of how older forms of ethical reflection (perhaps, most notably, virtue ethics) – however transformed through their applications within digital media – are often key in helping us analyze and successfully resolve contemporary ethical dilemmas.



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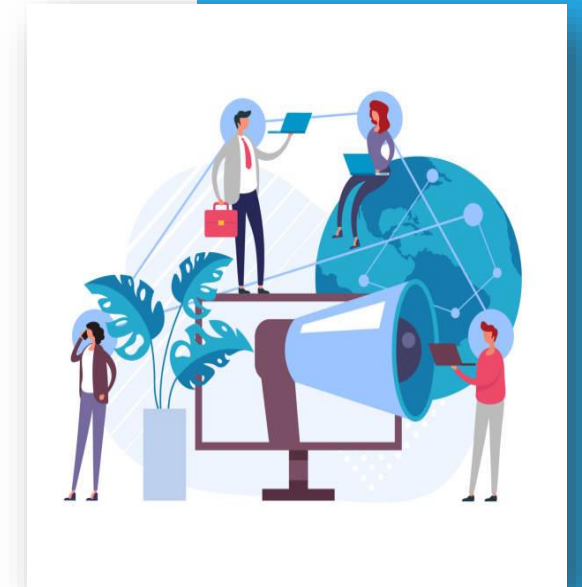
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Digital media and “greased information”

2. Digital media and “greased information”

A second characteristic of digital media is that digital information is “greased”.

That is, as James Moor (1997) has observed, “When information is computerized, it is greased to slide easily and quickly to many ports of call”.



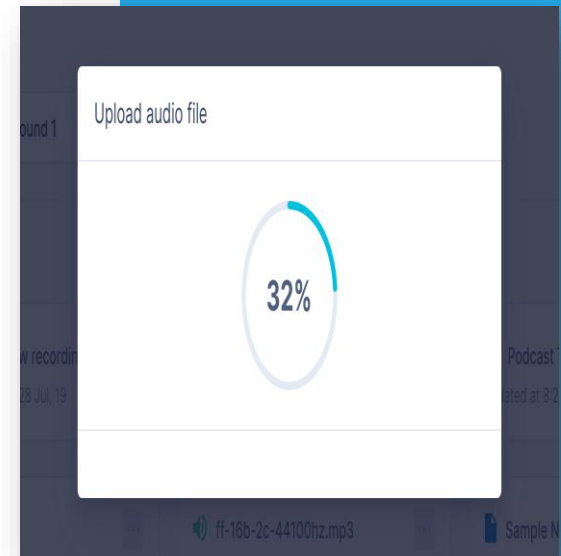
2. Digital media and “greased information”



As anyone who has hit the “post” button on a status update too quickly knows all too well, information in digital form can spread more or less instantaneously and globally, whether we always want it to or not.

2. Digital media and “greased information”

As the example of uploading embarrassing photos or videos from a smartphone suggests, the near-instantaneous and potentially global distribution of digital information raises especially serious ethical issues surrounding privacy.



2. Digital media and “greased information”

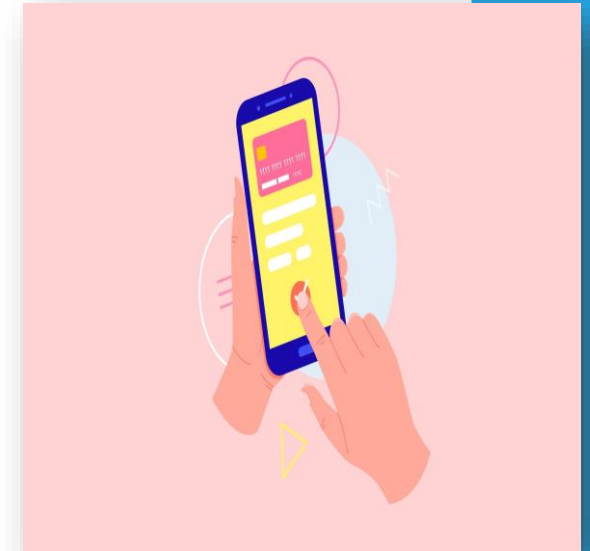


Where it was once comparatively difficult to capture and then transmit information about a person that she or he might consider private, digital media, beginning with computer databases that store and make easily accessible a vast range of information about people.

2. Digital media and “greased information”

Moreover, digital information as “greased” likewise makes it easy to copy and distribute, say, one’s favorite songs, movies, or texts.

To be sure, it has always been possible to copy and distribute copies of a given text, song, or film.

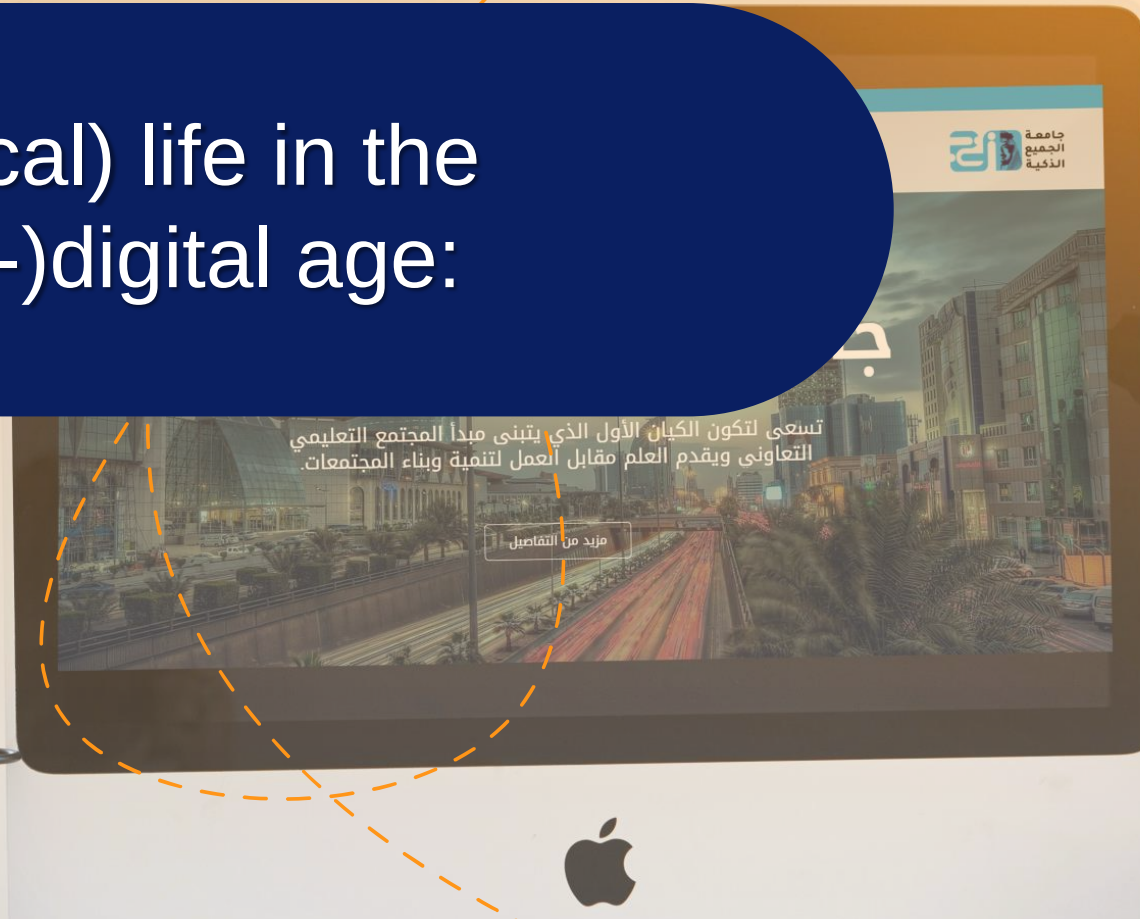


2. Digital media and “greased information”



But the ease of doing so with digital media is a **primary factor** in the **central problems** of copying, copyright, and so on.

(Ethical) life in the
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Digital media as communication media

3. Digital media as communication media:

The emergence of digital media – along with the internet and the Web as ways of quickly transporting digitized information – thus gives rise to strikingly new ways of communicating with one another at every level.



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(Ethical) life in the (post-)digital age:

3. Digital media as communication media:

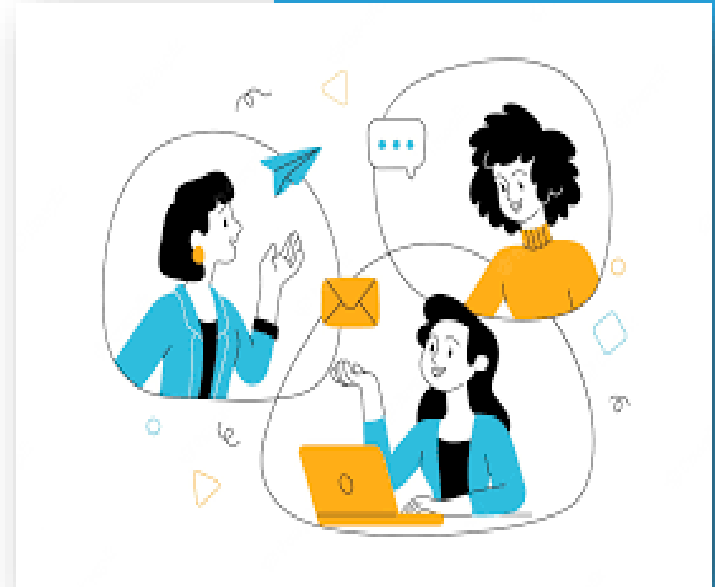


Especially as the internet and the Web now connect over half of the world's population (Internet World Stats 2018), they thereby make possible **cross-cultural encounters online** at a scope, speed, and scale unimaginable even just a few decades ago.

3. Digital media as communication media:

Along these lines, two additional features of digital media become crucial.

To begin with, digital media enjoy what has characterized as a kind of fluidity, specifically.



3. Digital media as communication media:



Secondly, the diffusion of internet and Web-based connectivity by way of smartphones and other digital devices makes increasingly real for us the ubiquity of digital media.

3. Digital media as communication media:

We are increasingly surrounded by an envelope of interacting digital devices – meaning first of all that we are “**Always on**” always connected.



3. Digital media as communication media:



The **ubiquity** of our interactive devices means that we are increasingly both the subjects and the objects of what Anders Albrechtslund (2008) early on identified as “**voluntary surveillance**”.

3. Digital media as communication media:

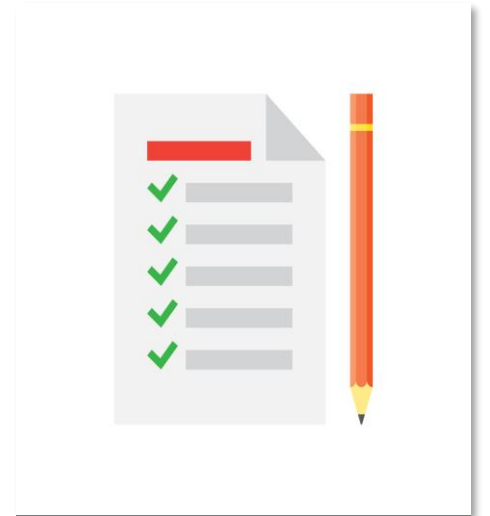


At the same time, however, the mobile or smartphones we carry with us into more or less every corner of our lives – including the (once) most intimate spaces of the bathroom and the bedroom – open up our lives in those spaces to new possibilities of tracking and recording in exquisite detail.

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Thanks for
listening



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