When Religion Meets New Media: How to Negotiate New Technology Religiously

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When Religion Meets New Media

[Routledge 2010]
Exploring Religious Community Online

- Online community as supplement not substitute
  - creates desire to go beyond screen
  - offers support & encouragement lacking in offline church

Lessons:
- Net part of Global Religious Community
- Online as integrated & networked
- Challenges traditional notions of gathering and authority
Religious Communities Response to New Media

Religious communities...

- Are active participants and evaluators of technology
- Undergo unique belief-based negotiation processes related to technological choices
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Media</th>
<th>New Media</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media space as static space</td>
<td>Media space as navigable space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear form dominant</td>
<td>Database form dominant:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Window—provide window on the world</td>
<td>Control panel-provide way to control</td>
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Religious Communities

Response to Media (Ferre, 2003)

- **Media as Conduits**
  - Positive response to media, gift of God
  - embracing & innovative use of media

- **Media as Modes of Knowing**
  - Negative/cautious response to media
  - suspicious of use of media

- **Media as Social Institution**
  - Reflective response to media, good & bad
  - use of media as purposeful & critical
Religious-Social Shaping of Technology

1) **History & Tradition**: Uncover history of community discourse & response to tech
   - Attention to community, authority & text

2) **Core Beliefs**: Identity dominant social values that shape interaction with tech

3) **Negotiation**: Highlight the process of Acceptance, Rejection and/or Reconfiguring

4) **Communal Framing**: Consider how new tech supports previous discourses or creates need for new patterns
Catholics Views & Use of Internet

- **History & Tradition**: Sacramental (community), Hierarchical (authority) and Intermediated (text)
- **Core Beliefs**: *Communio et Progressio*, media as “gifts of God”
- **Negotiation**: Social Affordance vs. Theological/Structural Constraints
- **Communal Framing**: Officializing Discourse as Community Guidebook & PR
A Theological Understanding of Technology

Theologically informed decisions requires:

- knowledge of communal history and response to media
- Awareness of current culture and context of community
- attention to negotiation strategies their roots & trajectories
- examination of internal and external discourse about technology
Implications

- Technological choices are constrained and motivated by community specific values
  - Tension emerge at intersection of belief & tradition
Thank You!

Blog: When Religion Meets New Media
- http://religionmeetsnewmedia.blogspot.com/

New Media, Religion & Digital Culture FB group: