Preface

Convergence has been a cornucopia in the communication industries, and it has been touted as the biggest leap in the digital era in the 21st century. From content producers, such as Viacom and Disney to the Internet and telecommunication firms, including AOL and AT&T, media and telecommunication firms have pursued convergence due largely in part to synergy effects, economies of scale, and the production and distribution of diverse cultural products. Converging media technologies and culture have therefore become some of the most significant trends, and convergence has rapidly become a major corporate strategy in the communication sector.

Media convergence can be categorized in three major areas: the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audience who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experience they want (Jenkins, 2006, 2-3). Convergence can also be categorized as the integration of different technologies, cultures and industries. Whilst these forms of convergence are not isolated, cultural convergence—a mix of two different cultures—for example, between American culture and Chinese culture, is increasingly a unique form of convergence in the globalized world. In other words, as convergence is an elusive term that is used in multiple contexts and is often ambiguous in its definition, one may need to understand convergence as not a simple meaning but multiple meanings.

There are several significant drivers for the swift growth of convergence in the communication sector; however, the contemporary media convergence has been primarily fuelled by two major elements: one is increasingly neoliberal communication policies, and the other is pervasive digital technologies. Most of all, convergence has been expedited with the rapid employment of neoliberal communication policies began in the early 1980s and continued throughout the 1990s. Before the introduction of and its integration with neoliberal globalization, the majority of media companies had focused their own core business areas, partially because the government policies, including antitrust laws and cross-ownership restraints, sought to define them distinctly and kept them separate (Baldwin et al., 1996). For example, Time Inc. was known as a publication company, and Viacom was famous for its TV syndication and cable businesses, whereas News Corporation was considered a newspaper company based in Australia.

However, pro-business neoliberal communication policies have lifted the barriers of new investment opportunities, which has resulted in the concentration of ownership through media convergence to the hands of a few media giants (Jin, 2009). Privatization of public broadcasting and telecommunications and the liberalization of domestic markets have blurred the distinction between the old media and the new media, and media companies have become a multi-media company through mergers and acquisitions (M&As) in the midst of neoliberal reform (McPhail, 2006). Deregulation, in particular, the loosening of regulations in cross-ownership among communication industries has become one of the most significant
factors in expanding their business areas beyond the traditional core business realms in many media companies (Thussu, 2006).

Meanwhile, the idea of convergence emphasizes the importance of the technological upheaval in communications and validly stresses that communications infrastructures are becoming multifunctional as they assimilated versatile digital electronics (Schiller, 2007). With the emergence of what is commonly referred to as Web 2.0 technology, convergence has been a must take business model in the communication industries. The Internet and mobile communications and their applications, including online gaming, have made a huge impact on political participation, business, education, culture, social and family relations. Several regions, including Asia and North America are marked by diverse penetration rates of high-speed internet and gaming (e.g., online, mobile, and console games), and mobile and broadband technologies, which are subject to local culture and socio-economic nuances. Young people are techno-savvy, and their use of new technology has been culturally remarkable. Media policy makers, software designers, mobile technicians, and computer corporations around the world are eager to learn, not only the result of the rapid growth of new technologies and their implications, but also the primary driver of the development of advancement of new technologies, as a reflection of the importance of convergence of technology and culture. Convergence is especially a challenge for many old media who attempt to venture into the Internet market, and it has fundamentally changed the structure and system of both small media firms and global media giants.

Finally, cultural convergence has become popular in the midst of globalization. The term cultural convergence can be used to describe mixed cultures or the process of mixing genres within a culture. Previously culture flowed mainly from Western countries to non-Western countries; however, with the rapid growth of local culture in Asia and Latin America, the direction of cultural flow has partially changed to between local (non-western) and local, as well as local and global (western) as in the case of the recent growth of Korean cultural penetration in East Asia. The emerging cultural exchanges in Asia and Latin America have proved that cultural convergence is becoming one of the major drivers for and a consequence of transcultural flow in several cultural genres, including film, music and television program, and gaming.

The overall mission of the book is to engage the complex relationship between technology and culture, as well as technology and socio-economic elements by exploring it in a transnational yet contextually grounded framework. This book employs diverse perspectives and approaches, from political economy to cultural studies, and from policy studies to ethnography in order to reflect several different focuses and areas in new media technologies and their convergence with culture. It also provides understanding of macro and micro level factors currently affecting convergence from both a developing and a developed nation’s perspective, while offering cross-country analysis of media and technology convergence that can be applied in various geographical settings. We expect that the documentation of our experience of technological change in economy and culture that may shed light on the more general trends of the shifting global media, culture and technology. In order to cater to the information needs of a diverse spectrum of readers and at the same time effectively present this global topic, this book is structured into five sections, which each section including a number of chapters. A brief description of each chapter is provided below.

Chapter 1, Super-sized Fandom: Globalization, Popular Culture, and the Peculiar Case of Miss Macdonald by Andrew Kirk, looks at “A Day in the Life of Miss McDonald”—a photography exhibit produced in the Philippines and disseminated online—to discuss how globalization, coupled with advances in Internet technologies, has transformed the manner in which popular culture acquires meaning.
The case of Miss McDonald offers a useful point of entry for understanding popular culture’s past as well as its global future.

Chapter 2, *Urban Screens and Transcultural Consumption between South Korea and Australia* by Audrey Yue and Sun Jung, examines urban screens as sites of media convergence and transcultural consumption. Using two case studies in Melbourne (Australia) and Songdo (Incheon, Korea), it considers how these screens have emerged through technological innovations led by cultural planning and urban regeneration. It critically examines the augmentation of these spaces as sites for cultural citizenship and transcultural consumption.

Chapter 3, *Sharing Bites on Global Screens: The Emergence of Snack Culture* by Hudson Moura, presents and analyses a variety of media snacks that form and circulate as snack culture, and it also elucidates some of those current changes that are shaping today’s relationship between society and media. It articulates that snack culture is the new phenomenon that shrinks media cultural products and can be easily shared on social networks of the Internet; therefore, it can be consumed in a reduced amount of time circulating instantly all over the globe.

Chapter 4, *Global Media and Information Ethics: Challenges Re-Examined* by D. Ndirangu Wa-Changa, argues that the emerging global phenomenon problematizes the Cartesian plane of oppositions – center vs. periphery, North vs. South, global vs. local, which has been the forte of globalization studies until recently. It pays attention to the antagonistic mechanics informing the domination and rejection of intangible ethical principles.

Chapter 5, *Public Discourses on the Korean Wave in Taiwan* by Li hyun Lin, analyzes how the interpretive communities have formed their interpretive frameworks, what they have conceived from the Korean Wave and what policy implications have been drawn. This chapter suggests that public discourses should address media problems in order to enhance communications at home and abroad.

Chapter 6, *The Emerging Media Exchange in the Cultural Regionalization of Asia* by Peichi Chung, focuses on the emerging media regionalization that takes place in Asia in 2000s. It selects three cases to present the detailed image of cultural standardization in Asia’s media regionalization. Among these, the first centers on the circulation of media text in television drama, emphasizing on Korean wave and the particular TV series, Boys Over Flowers. The second case discusses Taiwanese popular music and its influence on Mandopop in the Chinese communities.

Chapter 7, *New Imagined Community by Cultural Participation: A Study on Taiwan’s Digital Cultural Heritage* Pi-Chun Chang, analyzes the characteristics of National Digital Archives Program and how these characteristics promote a sense of participation. It discusses the convergence of new media theory and histories of Taiwan’s public museums and concludes that as digitized, web-based display practices are invented, the task of transforming the basis of cultural identity from ethnicity to participation is also invested.

Chapter 8, *New-Media-Based Attention Implosion and Television Publicness in the Era of Internet-TV Convergence* by Francis Lee, analyzes the contents of the Laughing Gor Facebook group, 100 blog articles discussing the phenomenon, and news coverage of the phenomenon. It also discussed the characteristics and significance of the Laughing Gor phenomenon within the specific context of television and society in Hong Kong, as well as the broad theoretical concern of television and organization of public attention in the Internet age.

Chapter 9, *Global Media Convergence and Cultural Transformation Bearing Witness through Technology War and Visual Culture in a Converged World* by Yasmin Ibrahim, argues that the aestheticization of suffering is a dominant and integral part of our culture and new media technologies illuminate
and offer new ways to commodify and engage with suffering. It argues that the commodification of suffering on video streaming platforms on the Internet are spaces of both perverse obsession with pain and suffering but equally they are performative counter-sites which offer different ways to record and narrate human suffering.

Chapter 10, Mum’s the Word: A Case Study of Intergenerational New Media Literacy in Shanghai By Students Larissa Hjorth, explores the role of QQ through a case study in Shanghai. It points out that QQ has become a rite of passage for the migrating youth leaving home to study in another city or country, because as the first generation to grow up within the IT educational reforms that saw a growing importance placed on new media and Internet literacy, these students are passing on their knowledge to their family and friends back home, demonstrating that SNS is far from the prerogative of Western, middle-class youth.

Chapter 11, The Electronic Pontifices Maximi: Social Networking and the Hope of a Right to Communicate by Aliaa Dakrouy, argues that it is almost impossible to have a right to communicate with the presence of a modern form of Pontifex Maximum: the media conglomerates by drawing from the work of Harold Innis, as well as Jean d’Arcy—the father of the right to communicate. It highlights the various possibilities of enforcing a human right to communicate with the introduction of the new social networking sites.

Chapter 12, The Impact of Social Software Inside Organizations by Robert Farrell et al., argues that engaging citizens in developing regions in information creation and information sharing leverages peoples’ existing social networks to facilitate transmission of critical information, exchange of ideas, and distributed problem solving. It describes Picture Talk, a mobile social computing application framework designed to facilitate local information sharing in regions with sparse Internet connectivity, low literacy rates and having users with little prior experience with information technology.

Chapter 13, Going Online in the PC Graveyard: The Sociocultural Evolution of Japan’s Mobile Internet by Inkyu Kang, explores how the keitai Internet has come to dominate Japan, marginalizing the PC-based Internet. The discussion focuses on the country’s cultural and ideological aspects that have worked as driving forces behind its mobile Internet boom. It examines how Japan has developed a qualitatively different Internet use pattern that cannot be revealed in statistics like “number of Internet subscribers” or “household.

Chapter 14, Exploring the Diffusion of Mobile Phone among Zimbabwean Migrants in Botswana by Do Kyun Kim, investigates the influence of mobile phone diffusion among Zimbabwean migrants at the individual, community, and governmental levels, given that from the early 2000s, the population mobility from Zimbabwe has drastically increased due to the collapse of the national economy and political instability.

Chapter 15, The Triumph of Shanzhai: No Name Brand Mobile Phones and Youth Identity in China by Mei Wu and Hongye Li, explores the connection between the popularity of shanzhai mobile phones among urban youth and their social characteristics in contemporary China. Through qualitative analyses of in-depth interviews both shanzhai and non-shanzhai users and selected online group discussions of shanzhai workers, this connection is examined in five realms: political attitudes, practical rationale, social values, interest-seeking and self identification.

Chapter 16, Convergence of Mobile TV in Everyday Life by Seung-Hyun Lee, explores the diffusion, use, and convergence of mobile TV with everyday life and culture and to characterize the use of mobile TV in a wide range of everyday practices by employing the approach of diffusion of innovation. It discovers what factors influencing the adoption and use of mobile TV-DMB, how mobile TV-DMB
influences both personal and mass media consumption behavior by overcoming the spatial and temporal limitations of traditional media.

Chapter 17, *Call Centers, India, and a New Politics: Cultural Interpretations* by Maheswar Satpathy, interrogates the relative benefits and weigh them with the demerits that it has accumulated on the loyal workers. It examines the motives of western countries (or at least the cause behind such accusation) to sustain their monopolistic cultural imperialism through multifarious means, as evidenced in the case of Call centers in India.

Chapter 18, *Mobile Games in China: Formation, Ferment, and Future* by Zixue Tai and Haifang Zeng, presents a critical analysis of China’s nascent but fast-evolving mobile game market. Through a penetrating examination of the historical evolution of the market from the late 1990s to the dawn of the 3G era, it offers insight on the changing dynamics of interplay as well as major trends of concentration and internationalization among key sectors of the Chinese mobile market structure.

Chapter 19, *Cinema of the Gun: Science and Technology Studies and the First Person Shooter* by Sam Hinton, argues for the use of STS in games research and uses an STS approach to explore the evolution of a 'genre' of computer games – the first person shooter, or FPS – and in particular the cinematic turn that has taken place within this genre over the past decade.

Chapter 20, *Playing as Producing: Convergence Culture and Localization of EA Digital Games in Taiwan* by Ying-Chia H. Lin, explores the dynamics and interactions between foreign producers, media technologies, and local consumers in the process of globalization through a discussion of the localization of digital games.

Chapter 21, *TV Box on the Internet: The Interplay between Politics and Market in China* by Anthony Fung and Luzhou Li, presents a special case in which political forces become a potential shaping force for media convergence and in the authoritarian environment of China, politics still reigns over technologies and the market. From a political economy perspective, the dominance of politics can be explained in terms of the process of regulatory spatialization.

Chapter 22, *Corporate Strategies in Media Convergence: A Comparative Study of Sony vs. Samsung as Transnational Cultural Industries* by Dal Yong Jin, investigates the cause of the changes and growth of Sony and Samsung, and it discusses the similarities and differences between them, with a focus on corporate policies and business strategies in convergence. It articulates the ways in which changing corporate policies have played a critical role in the growth of local-based transnational cultural corporations.

Chapter 23, *Fostering Innovation in Converging Audiovisual Media Services: Do Mergers and Acquisitions Really Help?* by Sergio Sparviero, examines whether the digitalization of media content and communication processes has been used as the main justification for an important turn in the design of regulations affecting various audiovisual media services and information industries, more in general. A brief case study presented in this chapter testifies that from the 1950s until the 1990s the United States’ regulator facilitated the introduction of fundamental innovations by preventing vertical mergers between different audiovisual media services.

Chapter 24, *The Three Cs of Key Music Sector Trends Today: Commodification, Concentration and Convergence* by Paschal Preston and Jim Rogers, explores the evolving relationships between new digital media technologies, socio-economic factors and media cultures as we enter the second decade of the twenty-first century. It examines the implications of these trends with regard to three fundamental concepts in the analysis of culture, namely commodification, concentration and convergence.
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REFERENCES


