

**History of Information, 2007
Final Exam Study Guide**

In the exam you will be asked to give short answers answer to 10 questions (total) which we will select from section I, a-d.

You will also be asked to write 4 essays. You will be given (a) three questions from the list in section II below, (b) one optional question, which you will not have seen, about the relationship between technology and community, and (c) one compulsory question, which you will not have seen, about the purpose of studying the history of information.

You will be expected to draw on examples from the course and the readings to support your answers.

I. Short-answer questions (we will select 10 from the list below):

a. Give the date of the following:

- Founding of ARPANet
- First email program created
- Launching of Macintosh
- First Web Browser
- Illustrated London News

b. Explain in a sentence what happened on the following dates and why, therefore, the date is significant in the history of information:

- 1665
- 1709/10
- 1755
- 1793
- 11/11/1921

c. Identify and explain the significance of the following (where relevant, give examples):

- i. Creel Committee
- ii. Graphical User Interface
- iii. The inverted pyramid
- iv. Functional literacy
- v. Packet boat
- vi. The "Great Game"
- vii. BSD
- viii. Extensive reading
- ix. Fireside chats

- x. Lenny Skutnik moment
- xi. Leni Riefenstahl
- xii. Yellow journalism
- xiii. Muckraking

d. Identify and explain the significance to the history of information of the following people:

- i. Augusta (Ada) Byron, Countess of Lovelace
- ii. Ken Thompson
- iii. Elisha Gray
- iv. Alan Turing
- v. Josiah Wedgwood
- vi. John Napier
- vii. Herman Hollerith
- viii. Samuel Pepys
- ix. Alphonse Bertillon
- x. Father Charles Coughlin
- xi. Guglielmo Marconi
- xii. Andrew Carnegie
- xiii. Melvil Dewey
- xiv. the figure in the image below



II. Essay questions.

You will have to answer four questions. We will select three questions from the following list, and we will give you one more optional question and one compulsory question.

Give several reasons why most web content was initially in English, and why

the relative proportion of English-language content is becoming smaller with the passage of time.

"The trade of advertising is now so near perfection that it is not easy to propose any improvement".--Samuel Johnson, 1759 Discuss, showing with examples ways in which advertising has and has not changed since the eighteenth century.

Consider the following remarks about the significance of literacy among American blacks:

"Learning would spoil the best n_____ in the world. Now,' said he, 'if you teach that n_____ (speaking of myself) how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave.'" The Autobiography of Frederick Douglass, 1836.

"Certainly the infecting of the backward portion of the race with a high estimate of cleanliness, neatness, family privacy, domestic comfort, and literacy is an agent quite as moralizing as the dread of future punishments or the love of an ethical God. " Edward Alsworth Ross in the Am. Jrnl. Of Sociology, 1898. How do these two quotes illustrate the conflicting roles historically assigned to the achievement of literacy?

Technological enthusiasts talk of the Internet "annihilating space and time" and producing decentralized organizations. Why should historians of information be suspicious of one or the other of these claims in the light of similar claims that have been made about other technologies?

What properties of the technology made the cash register a success with retailers when it was introduced? Why could its success be seen as indicative of a general trend in the development of the computer from Babbage to IBM?

Though there may be many reasons for saying it, why did Voltaire write that "It is whispered in Christian Europe that the English are mad and maniacs"? What experiment was the English conducting and what made it a particularly challenging experiment to assess? Name some of the critical figures in its success.

What is the sphere of legitimate controversy? How has it changed over time? How does it relate to the notion of balance? Give specific examples to make your point.

[A photograph] cannot be disputed -- it carries with it evidence which God himself gives through the unerring light of the world's greatest luminary. . . . it will tell its own story, and the sun to testify to its truth. . . . Cal. Newspaper, 1851 Cite specific historical examples that justify this appraisal and others that undercut it.

How do the justifications offered for the importance of "information literacy" resemble those used in earlier campaigns for literacy? How is information literacy different?

How, according to Starr, did political decisions shape the separate development of broadcast in the U.S. and the U.K?