



## UNIT 15 MASS MEDIA

*TV is chewing gum for the eyes.*  
✦ Frank Lloyd Wright

**i** Before reading the text, discuss the following questions in class.

1. What newspapers do you read?
2. What do people read about in newspapers?
3. What is your favourite TV channel? Why?

In modern society we are in daily contact with different types of **mass media**. We **receive** most of our information through television, **newspaper**, radio or the Internet. These are the media that **reach** a very large **audience**, that is why they are called mass media. They **serve**, first of all, as sources of information. They allow us to **follow world affairs** soon after the events happen. In the case of **live broadcasting**, we learn about **current events** as they happen. Most people follow the national and world news regularly to be well-informed. In the case of catastrophes, such as earthquakes or terrorist attacks, the whole world follows the mass media to get the latest information. Many **channels broadcast breaking news** in such situations.

Mass media do not only inform, but they also educate. Documentary programmes take us to places we would never have a chance to see and provide us with information that we would **otherwise** not know about.

**Apart from** the informative and educative function, the role of mass media is to **entertain**. Thousands of people sit in front of their TV sets at the same time and watch a World Cup final match in football or hockey. People like to relax watching films, **sitcoms**, **soap operas** or **series**; some prefer discussions or reality shows. For many people the TV or the Internet are the only ways of entertaining themselves. The sick, the unemployed, **the disabled** or lonely people normally watch it much more than people who have families or who are busy. On the other hand, there are people who prefer to read, meet others or go out instead of watching TV.

There are children and young people who are **obsessed with** watching the TV several hours a day, which is not healthy either to their mental or physical development. It **damages their eyesight** and prevents them from doing sports or being outside. Watching TV is also connected to the habit of eating too much. TV prevents family members from communicating with each other. Many parents

do not have time for their children and TV is a way of "solving" this problem. Watching TV is also one of the reasons why people do not read as many books as they did before.

It is a well-known fact that violence in films influences children and the young in a very bad way. Children also sometimes have problems to differentiate between **fiction** and reality. Some programmes, such as reality shows, create different pseudo-idols and present money or physical beauty as having the highest value in life. This **has a negative impact on** young people's mental development.

**Advertising** through TV **commercials** has become one of the most effective ways of selling products of different kinds. It helps finance TV channels, especially private ones. Advertising and propaganda on TV influences **viewers** a lot, although they do not realise or admit it.

## RADIO, TELEVISION

*Slovak television* is a public television network that broadcasts on **analogue terrestrial** television, **cable television** and satellite TV. The first channel broadcasts mostly news, political discussions, films, series and children programmes. The second specialises in documentaries, **quiz shows**, educational programmes and music. It also broadcasts live football or hockey matches. These channels broadcast mainly in Slovak but also have special programmes in Hungarian. Foreign language films on Slovak TV channels are mostly **dubbed**, rarely **subtitled**.

Commercial stations, such as *TV Markiza* and *TV Joj*, also **enjoy wide popularity**. Popular series, sitcoms, quiz shows and reality shows also form a part of their programme. The introduction of **people-meters increased the competition** among the channels. In 2001, *T43*, the first Slovak news channel started broadcasting. Thanks to this channel, Slovaks can watch current news throughout the whole day. Its programmes **cover a wide range of** topics, mostly from economy, politics, technology and sport. Slovaks who receive broadcasting through cable TV can also enjoy watching several Czech channels. Thanks to no language barriers and interesting programmes, they are very popular in our country. Apart from these channels, there exist a number of local channels focusing on local interests. Some TV stations make a **selected content** of their programmes available on their **websites**. In Britain, radio and television broadcasting is provided by the **state-owned BBC** (*British Broadcasting Corporation*), which has a high international reputation for its objectivity. **Besides** the BBC, there are also other radio and TV broadcasters. The BBC has five national radio programmes and several television channels. The BBC's five programmes for radio broadcasting have their specialisations. The famous *BBC World Service* broadcasts across the world in English and many other languages, including Slovak.

There is a **variety of** different types of radio and TV stations in the USA. Most non-commercial radio stations are public and educational stations which are **operated** by colleges and universities and by various religious groups. Hundreds of

radio stations in the USA broadcast in languages other than English for minorities, such as Chinese, French, Japanese, Polish and Portuguese. About 160 radio stations throughout the USA broadcast only in Spanish.

## NEWSPAPERS

Most newspapers are **daily newspapers**. They are **aimed at** certain social classes with a certain education and political orientation. *SME* is a daily paper with **nation-wide** distribution that is **widely read** and **influential**. *Pravda* is another widely read paper in our country. The best selling daily, however, is the **tabloid** *Nový Čas* whose **supplements** "*Nový čas vikend*" and "*Nový čas pre ženy*" have become very popular. Economic periodicals include the daily *Hospodárske noviny* and a **weekly** *Trend*. *The Slovak Spectator* is a weekly English language newspaper providing information about Slovakia in English. Most of the newspapers now have their on-line **editions**, which are becoming more and more popular. Besides these, there are many specialist weekly and monthly lifestyle magazines for men, women and teenagers, for people interested in sports, gardening, cars etc.

The British communication media, press, broadcasting and TV, are among the most influential in the world. There are five **quality** daily papers or broadsheets, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *The Independent* and *The Daily Telegraph* which **contain** a wide variety of national and international news, **reports** from parliamentary debates, **reviews** of the arts, **features** about fashion and sport and business news. Nearly all the papers pay special attention to the reporting of sports, which play an important role in British life. Then there are papers with a high circulation, such as *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sun*, which are "popular papers" or tabloids. They hardly publish any serious material. The articles mostly deal with sex scandals of pop stars.

The largest daily newspapers published in the USA are *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *New York Daily News*, *USA Today* and *The New York Post*, followed by such titles as *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Detroit News* and *The San Francisco Chronicle*. All of these are very serious "quality papers".

## THE INTERNET

The Internet presents a true revolution in many areas of our life. It has changed the way we study, work, entertain or communicate with family, friends, business partners and people we do not know. It has made access to any type of information easier. Nowadays, we do not have to use the phone anymore to find out about departures of trains, **opening hours** or details about products or services. We do not depend on encyclopedias or dictionaries to find information. Internet **search engines** and online books and dictionaries are gradually **replacing** them.

It is becoming a must for companies and different institutions and organisations to have their own website. Many professions or services depend on the Internet. **Via the Internet** we send documents, buy things, book hotels, reserve tickets, transfer our money or find life partners.

These days, more and more people use e-mail to communicate and send information or documents. Many Slovaks use the Internet as a form of **entertainment**. Chatting, joining different discussion groups and reading **blogs** is becoming very popular, especially among the young.

Access to the Internet has also become easier in our country. Most schools, companies and institutions have access to it. The high number of Internet providers has decreased the prices of using the Internet. It is becoming normal that Slovaks also **have access to the Internet** at home.

Much discussion concerning the safety of the Internet has been going on in the last few years. Most of them **concern** the **safety** of personal information and the safety of bank transfers. Many hackers get into different computer systems and misuse the **data**. They also create computer viruses which can **destroy** the data completely.

➤ See also Unit 5 Shopping and Services, Unit 12 Science and Technology, 14 Communication and Languages

### ? Questions

1. What do you understand by the term "mass media"?
2. Why does TV have a negative impact on people?
3. What are the most popular newspapers in Slovakia? Describe them.
4. Which are the four most famous British quality dailies?
5. What is a tabloid?
6. Which are the largest quality daily papers published in the USA?
7. In what way did the Internet change our lives?
8. Do all the US radio stations broadcast only in English?
9. What do people use the Internet for?
10. What do you think about Internet safety?



### Websites

<http://www.bbc.co.uk>  
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk>  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com>