

# ‘Empowering Global and Public History: Unlocking the Transformative Potential of Digital Media’

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## Introduction

Over the past fifty years, the internet and digital media have transformed the way we access and share information, influencing almost every aspect of our lives. Amid this rapid shift in social, cultural, and political spheres, information has become a powerful driver of change. Many of the social, cultural, political, and technological gains achieved before the digital age are now under intense scrutiny, largely due to the proliferation of disinformation and misinformation. The unprecedented flow of digital information presents a challenge for people trying to distinguish fact from fiction.

This ongoing information war, driven by deep ideological divides and involving citizens worldwide, is fuelled by factions on both ends of the political spectrum. It threatens to undo the progress made in crucial areas such as race and gender equality, religious freedom, public health, and environmental sustainability—advancements painstakingly achieved over decades and centuries. Media polarisation, combined with the widespread sharing of false or misleading information, complicates these issues further and risks rolling back hard-won gains, sowing discord within communities. As scholars, activists, policymakers, and ordinary citizens engage in this turbulent debate, the very fabric of society hangs in the balance, making it urgent to develop discernment and foster constructive dialogue to navigate these challenges.

The digital media revolution can only be compared to the invention of the printing press in the fifteenth century, which sparked significant positive changes across Europe and beyond, though on a smaller scale. In contrast, today's digital shift is unmatched in scope and global impact. Throughout any

major societal transformation, there's often a tug-of-war between progress and tradition. This push-and-pull prompts individuals and groups to ask tough questions, challenge the status quo, and reexamine long-held beliefs. History has shown that such debates not only spark conversation but also build community among those advocating for change. Activist groups rally to advance their causes, even as conservative factions push back to defend traditional values. This ongoing cycle of wins and setbacks shapes society's landscape, highlighting the delicate act of balancing progress with respect for different perspectives during times of change.

Experts across various fields play a vital role in clarifying facts and showing how they evolve over time through their specialised knowledge and methods. It's clear that many digital platforms tend to foster division, negativity, and superficiality—designed more to provoke ideological battles than to promote meaningful discussion. Traditional ways of sharing information—such as lectures, seminars, and publications—often reach audiences already in agreement, leaving opposing views on the sidelines. This article examines how history has shaped previous information revolutions and influenced society's development, while also considering how experts can step in to combat misinformation and disinformation amid the rise of digital media and AI in public history debates.

## Global and Public History

“In evolutionary time, *Homo sapiens* emerged very recently, no more than 200,000 years ago. Humans have not physically evolved since, apart from some minor and inherently meaningless variations in skin colour, hair, and body shape. According to the latest scientific research, everyone alive today is descended from a small group of anatomically modern humans, *Homo sapiens*, which emerged in East

Africa. Recent genetic studies demonstrate that all mitochondria within human cells descend from a single woman, who lived in Africa between 150,000 and 200,000 years ago.”<sup>1</sup>

Anthropological and archaeological evidence scattered around the globe supports the above narrative that humans descended from a single family, and Historical records that stretch back over 2,500 years to ancient civilisations like Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, India, and Greece bolster and reflect these scientific and anthropological findings. By analysing written documents alongside archaeological and zoological discoveries, scholars have gained a more comprehensive understanding of human society and its evolution. This journey highlights the collective efforts of countless generations across various regions that ultimately shaped our civilisation. It all traces back to early human history in Africa, where Homo sapiens first emerged. Through migration, trade, cultural exchanges, and interactions, the rich tapestry of cultures and societies we see today around the globe has gradually evolved and expanded.

World history offers a broad account of human activities across time, highlighting the core themes of survival, self-protection, and improving life experiences. This record covers a wide range of topics, including social structures, cultural practices, economic systems, political movements, ideological changes, and development. It engages in meaningful debates about the interactions between humans and animals, exploring their roles in shaping societies, behaviours, and environments. Furthermore, it investigates material aspects, such as artefacts, technologies, and economic histories, that have influenced human development and progress across various civilisations and eras. Therefore, world history is our collective footprint on this planet and is shaped by all of us.

Through this perspective, world history provides valuable insights into how our past continues to influence our present and shape our future. This body of

research illustrates how these issues have transformed over time, both historically and scientifically. Such perspectives enable us to comprehend cultural dynamics, civic engagement, and the constantly changing nature of human relationships. Hendrick's book, 'Technology: A World History,' effectively illustrates how early stages of human progress led to the creation of simple tools and how these tools evolved across different cultures and regions. His study showed a global perspective of our civilisation and its development.<sup>ii</sup> Technological advancements and other innovations, along with the growth of our civilisation, reflect the collective efforts of our ancestors from all parts of the world.

In academic circles, the term "history" goes beyond simply listing past events; it involves a nuanced analysis of key incidents and their wider effects. This includes exploring why specific events happened, the underlying causes behind these changes, and the subsequent influence on future societies. Topics can range from the impact of a particular invention or social movement to political upheavals or demographic shifts, examining the complex interplay of cultural, economic, and technological factors. It also involves studying human and animal behaviours, evolutionary developments, and the crucial discoveries that have significantly shaped our societal structures.

To count as a proper historical account, a piece of writing needs to meet academic standards—showing thorough research and analysis—and often undergo peer review. It should delve into past events or themes with scholarly rigour, enriching our understanding of how these elements have shaped human experience across time. In essence, history as an academic discipline requires more than just storytelling; it calls for an evaluative approach that links the past with the present and the future. As we use the word 'history' in everyday life, it typically refers to static memories of past events, but in academic terms,

history is dynamic—constantly changing as new evidence or research sheds fresh light on the past.

This broad, interdisciplinary approach to history plays a crucial role in fostering greater tolerance and empathy among communities. It highlights our shared challenges and triumphs throughout human history and underscores the ongoing development of our civilisation.

In the pre-Internet era, public history often focused on heritage sites, museums, or traditional media, as Tosh noted,<sup>iii</sup> but with the advent of digital media, it became the 1st-tier information source for people around the world, and public history should concentrate primarily on digital media.

### **New Media and Information in Recent History**

Humans today are confronted with an unprecedented volume of information, which includes both verified content and misinformation across various print and digital platforms. While this may appear to be a modern issue, the spread of misinformation has played a significant role in ancient and medieval politics and societies as well. Rumours and conspiracy theories about events, individuals, religions, tribes, and cultures have long fuelled misunderstandings and conflicts throughout history.<sup>iv</sup>

Following the invention of the printing press in the late fifteenth century, a transformative development that played a crucial role in the European Renaissance, which led to the European Reformation. This movement, which gained momentum in the early sixteenth century, saw Christians questioning and challenging traditional religious practices and doctrines of the Catholic Church. As a result, Christianity was divided into various branches, most notably Protestantism and Catholicism, resembling an ideological information war characterised by intense theological disputes and differing interpretations of the Bible. The proliferation of printed materials not only fuelled the

Reformation but also facilitated the spread of new ideas across Europe, enabling individuals and communities to engage directly with religious texts and challenges to the hitherto social, cultural, and civic status quo.

During this period, education was increasingly prioritised, leading to a rise in literacy rates among the general population. This shift enabled more people to read and interpret religious texts, contributing to the growth of individual belief systems and further allowing questioning of the existing ideological landscape. Consequently, multipolar worldviews on religion, culture, and societal issues began to emerge, reshaping Europe's cultural and religious framework for generations to come.

### *Media and Global Transformation*

Starting in the early nineteenth century, significant social, political, and economic changes paved the way for a more representative, equitable, and compassionate society. These changes included the abolition of slavery, marking a crucial step in recognising the fundamental rights of all individuals, regardless of race. Furthermore, the movement towards gender equality gained momentum, advocating for women's rights to vote, work, and access education, thereby shifting societal norms. Progressive labour laws emerged as a response to the Industrial Revolution. They aimed to protect workers' rights, improve working conditions, and establish fair wages. Collectively, these advancements contributed to a more just society in which diverse voices could be heard and valued, fostering a high level of tolerance among religiously and ideologically diverse communities. Nationalism and aspiration to self-govern intensified worldwide, and after the Second World War, it triggered decolonisation and many new nation-states were established.

Moreover, this era was marked by significant scientific inventions and discoveries, despite agitation and resistance from anti-reformers, which profoundly shaped our civilisation. Key figures such as Galileo Galilei, Isaac

Newton, Edward Jenner, Michael Faraday, Nikola Tesla, Charles Darwin, Alan Turing, and Tim Berners-Lee left lasting impacts through their groundbreaking scientific inventions and discoveries.

Despite encountering challenges and resistance, activists successfully encouraged positive ideological discussions until 2000, which contributed to the development of a more cohesive, fair, tolerant, and compassionate society. Some notable figures whose activism played a significant role in these changes include William Wilberforce, Emmeline Pankhurst, Mahatma Gandhi, Charles Bradlaugh, Dr James Niven, Dr Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela.

The individuals highlighted above are key figures in their fields. Yet, it is crucial to recognise that countless others from diverse regions and eras have made significant contributions to these inventions and discoveries to this day. The journey of survival and progress has never been an individual effort; it has always been a collective endeavour. From the dawn of humanity, the quest for survival has driven the invention and discovery of essential tools and ideas. These advancements have empowered humans to dominate the animal kingdom, adapt to their environments, and significantly enhance their quality of life. The legacy of the printing press continues to foster social, cultural, and economic cooperation.

By deepening economic and technological connections within a globalised framework, societies not only engaged in trade but also exchanged knowledge for financial benefit, equipping developing countries with essential tools for prosperity. Since World War II, the world has become increasingly interconnected, thanks to technological advances that have made it easier to connect people and goods across great distances. Travelling and shipping goods have become faster and more affordable. Through GATT, the WTO, and other regional cooperation, the world has witnessed sustained growth across all regions.<sup>v</sup>

Through the United Nations and its peripheries, including local and international NGOs, health and education have been prioritised, and are working together to improve human lives. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund), World Food Programme (WFP), UNRWA (UN Relief and Works Agency), and World Health Organisation (WHO) are key institutions under the United Nations (UN) that work with local communities to improve poverty, health, and economic conditions for deprived communities. In the West, progressive trade policies aimed at lowering barriers for all nations became a cornerstone of the neoliberal economic model, promoting free markets, deregulation, and the reduction of tariffs and non-tariff barriers as part of a broader push for financial liberalisation. Although these trade rules primarily benefited developed countries, in the long run, poorer nations gained as well—China and the so-called tiger economies serve as prime examples. This economic drive fostered rapid growth worldwide, transforming many poorer countries into developing nations, and despite rapid population increases, global poverty began to decline.

### **Internet and Digital Media**

The internet experienced a rapid and unprecedented transformation, evolving from an intranet into a global network in just a decade. Consequently, over 74% of the world's population became connected to this network. However, this swift evolution left many communities and authorities unprepared. The rapid spread of information raised questions about the reliability of knowledge, leading individuals without proper expertise or qualifications to challenge expert opinions and established institutions, thereby resulting in populism and overshadowing political convictions.

This environment paved the way for the widespread dissemination of misinformation and disinformation. False narratives and conspiracies began to spread rapidly across social media platforms and websites, blurring the lines

between credible information and unreliable sources. As alternative viewpoints proliferated, society faced a growing challenge in discerning truth from falsehood, making it crucial for individuals to develop critical thinking and media literacy skills to navigate the overwhelming flow of online information.

Before the advent of the Internet, books, journals, libraries, and media outlets such as TV and radio were the primary sources of information. While this information was often debated and challenged in various ways, it typically led to a coherent and verified understanding, at least in most cases. However, several factors—including rapid population growth, increased global interconnectedness through technology, a swift rise in educational institutions worldwide, and, most significantly, the emergence of the Internet in the 1990s—have transformed information and knowledge into a phenomenon no one could have anticipated.

During the Renaissance and the Reformation, the massive information revolution was contemplated by a small number of people; at that time, there were approximately 90 million Europeans, of whom around 10 per cent were educated. However, those who sought a high level of education had immense influence in this transformation, steering the revolution and advancing their ideals, including those of Socrates, Thucydides, Plato, Hippocrates, Aristotle, Galen, Ibn Sina, Al Razi, among others who promoted rational thinking. Despite the invention of the printing press, educational expansion was slow and varied across Europe.<sup>vi</sup> But this digital information revolution is global in scope, and the rise of literacy is unprecedented.

Conversely, the internet and digital revolution, which began in the 1990s in Europe and America, rapidly revitalised and connected other parts of the world. By the turn of the millennium, almost all countries had internet and digital infrastructure. With smartphones, people could access any information they desired, but this time, the information is unchecked by experts. Today, around

73% of the world's population has access to the internet, which is 6.4 billion people.<sup>vii</sup> This transformation exceeds any Renaissance; it is unprecedented, global in scope, and involves 6.4 billion people worldwide. The flow of information is uncontrollable, even as various authorities try to filter it according to their preferences. The vast amount of information available on the internet sharply contrasts with established knowledge and is often based on individual opinions that, unchecked, are already causing social, political, and economic repercussions globally. At the same time, the involvement of experts in digital debates is limited and often non-existent. Unlike during the Renaissance, the current era is dominated by ideologues who aim to reverse many of the positive social and cultural changes that occurred during and after that period.

In today's fast-paced and information-saturated social landscape, academics and scholars often stoically allow misinformation and alternative facts to gain mainstream acceptance. Various experts and conservationists recognise that countermeasures based on verified information are mainly confined to campuses and seminars and are less effective at combating misinformation, while digital media, the main source of information, lacks expert opinion. Data and statistics are crucial for countering unverified information, and an expert can only robustly publish and argue an opinion. The disengagement or reluctance of experts to engage in public debate in public places is one of the leading causes of 'alternative' information becoming mainstream, shaping political narratives and serving as a key driver of legislation. A famous British conservationist, Chris Peckham, recently said, "I should've been able to influence this more positively. (The nature loss is) on my conscience because conservationists like me have not done enough".<sup>viii</sup>

## **Digital Media and Public History**

The internet revolution and digitisation, together with rapid technological

advances that facilitate the seamless integration of software and hardware, are driving an enormous flow of information. Today, most of the world's population engages in both face-to-face and online debates, similar to those that took place during the Renaissance at the community level, but now on a global scale, involving around 6.4 billion people and providing instant access to vast amounts of information. Despite the prevalence of rumours and gossip during the Renaissance, chronicles, written documents, and manuscripts effectively countered misinformation and helped establish a clearer understanding of our civilisation and its history.

As mentioned, this internet revolution is unprecedented: over 6.4 billion people worldwide are connected, and it remains enormous and uncontrollable even in the most developed countries. Despite strict controls by some authoritarian governments, legislation to restrict users and information is still under discussion in most developed nations. As mentioned, most of the debates are ideological, religious, regional and race-related, and the aim is to divide people, challenge academic knowledge and promote intolerance.

A statement or comment on a digital platform may spread misinformation if it is not corrected by expert opinion or public history. Understanding the basic concepts of history for all world citizens is crucial to engaging with the digital world, which has a worldwide reach. A publication on TikTok, X, Facebook, Threads, or Instagram will reach every region of the world and every community. A personal opinion about something may cause outrage and division. Having a basic understanding of history, about ourselves, and our evolutionary journey will promote cohesiveness and tolerance among different groups of people, cultures, and religions.

Public history plays a crucial role in shaping fundamental historical knowledge within public debates. This is especially important in an era where populism and misinformation threaten to erode rational discussions and

overshadow ideological conversations, which are deeply rooted in the social and political landscapes of many developed countries. Such trends can significantly affect social cohesion and tolerance. The traditional idea of “intellectual empowerment for active citizens, as promoted by John Tosh, has lost its relevance.<sup>ix</sup> Today, active citizens and politicians often align with populist sentiments, with their views heavily influenced by public polling.<sup>x</sup> In contemporary politics, control often lies in the hands of the masses, fostering an environment in which meaningful conviction and rational discourse on critical political issues are frequently overshadowed or completely evaded. This phenomenon is especially prevalent in populist slogans that sensationalise rather than inform. For instance, phrases like "Migrants are eating cats" serve not only to provoke outrage but also to distract from substantive discussions about immigration policies, economic implications, and social integration. Such slogans appeal to emotion rather than logic, hindering the public's ability to engage in informed debate and perpetuating divisive narratives.

Every global citizen who owns a smartphone has the potential to be an active participant in society. Sharing information can influence others and potentially shape government policy. While discussions of public history often focus on heritage sites, museums, or traditional media, as noted by Tosh, there is a significant oversight: digital media has become the primary source of information for people worldwide. Each vote reflects an individual's ideological stance and is influenced by discussions on digital platforms. However, much of this information is unverified and often based on personal opinions rather than reliable sources or established public history, which typically includes trusted media and informed dialogue.

Some information is indeed verifiable, having undergone rigorous academic scrutiny and being accessible online. The widespread availability of global internet connections, economic growth in developing countries, increasing

globalisation driven by technology and migration, and rising literacy rates are all key factors contributing to the vast flow of information. This information varies greatly, ranging from verified facts to personal opinions and misinformation. While fake news and rumours have always existed, their prevalence today is unprecedented. The digital media landscape has played a crucial role in the rapid spread of false information worldwide.<sup>xi</sup>

## **The Root of Misinformation and Alternative News**

Obviously, the world centre of digitalisation is the hub of alternative news and misinformation. A substantial number of the online platforms that allow free speech, which also significantly contribute to the spread of alternative and fake news, are based in key American cities such as San Francisco, New York, and Seattle. These platforms thrive under the protection of freedom of speech, a cornerstone of American democracy, which enables citizens to actively participate in public discourse and share their viewpoints without fear of government censorship.

This environment results in a massive influx of unhindered information, much of which often aligns with or promotes specific ideological narratives. Thus, the United States finds itself at the forefront of contentious ideological battles, where various factions—ranging from political organisations to foreign entities—are increasingly pouring financial resources into American institutions and media outlets.<sup>xii</sup> Their goal is to sway public opinion and influence ongoing debates that shape the nation's political and social landscape. As such, the interplay of digital communication and ideological warfare makes the U.S. a complex battleground for competing ideas and interests on a global stage.

Simultaneously, certain hostile countries and organisations actively disseminate false information to manipulate public opinion and promote divisive debates in the USA and other democratic countries. They often utilise

fake accounts on social media platforms to amplify their messages and create an illusion of consensus. These entities employ well-financed agents who strategically support specific individuals and institutions aligned with their interests, furthering their agenda and undermining trust in credible sources of information.<sup>xiii</sup> This orchestrated effort not only spreads misinformation but also destabilises societal discourse and erodes democratic values.

Moreover, the most powerful country in the world, which once led in providing truthful and progressive information, has increasingly become a mouthpiece for falsehoods and disinformation. From top to bottom, the current structure of the U.S. government is influenced by a leader who promotes alternative news, ironically aiming to undermine the systems of truthful information established by various ideologically driven governments in the past. Most of all, federal branches of high offices are occupied by knowledge and science deniers. The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is led by a vaccine conspiracy theorist who already fired all seven CDC vaccine experts and is currently advising parents not to take specific vaccines, which were the cornerstone to prevent child and adult mortality and prolonging life.<sup>xiv</sup> Evidently, the vaccination of children and adults is a crucial part of public health to boost health and prolong life in any society. Hesitancy and misinformation will have a detrimental impact on public health.

The current administration in the United States has ceased, dismantled, or terminated its collaboration with various local and international institutions, including environmental agencies, development assistance programs, vaccine distribution initiatives, and organisations such as UNESCO and UNICEF.<sup>xv</sup> These entities play a crucial role in addressing natural disasters, alleviating poverty, conserving our civilisation, and enhancing the quality of life for citizens worldwide.

Previously, despite their ideological differences, the U.S. was a beacon of innovation in technology, medicine, and governance, and was working with the aforementioned agencies to promote peace and democracy. These achievements were built on the foundations of science, knowledge, and truthful information, and globally forged alliances with democratically elected governments.

It appears that an atmosphere of deception, authoritarianism, and cronyism is not only dominating the political landscape of the United States but is also exerting its influence on democratic nations around the world. This troubling trend involves manipulating information, suppressing dissenting voices, and fostering favouritism in government dealings, ultimately undermining the values of transparency and accountability that are vital to robust democracies. As a result, countries that strive to uphold democratic principles may find themselves swayed by unchecked power and misinformation, posing a significant threat to the integrity of global democratic institutions.

During the COVID-19 lockdown and the vaccination rollout, many expert-recommended measures to contain, prevent, and treat the virus were contested by both the far left and the far right with their own perceived belief rather than scientific and rational data. Ideologically driven individuals and corporations are pouring money into academia, media, and social institutions to sway public debates in their favour. As a result, blogs and podcasts have become primary sources of information, as well as a significant source of misinformation and alternative news. It should be noted that alternative news bypasses scrutiny and expert knowledge, relying instead on popular opinion.

The ideological debate is very intense in developing countries. As literacy rates increase and smartphones become more widely available alongside internet access, citizens are gaining access not just to selective information but also to data that was previously restricted by governments before the digital revolution. This moment can be compared to a "European Reformation" for

many citizens in developing countries, similar to when more people became literate and could read translated versions of religious texts. The invention of the mass printing press around 1450 led to questioning various aspects of divine revelation and other philosophical issues, ultimately encouraging civic discussions.

## The digital information, social transformation, and Expert Knowledge

The unprecedented availability of digital information has profoundly empowered citizens worldwide, enabling them to explore and juxtapose a rich tapestry of ideological perspectives and scientific insights about our complex world. From political beliefs to social values, this remarkable accessibility allows individuals to delve deeply into diverse arguments and viewpoints. As a result, many find themselves reassessing their long-held convictions, fostering a spirit of critical inquiry that encourages them to challenge and reevaluate established social and political norms. This dynamic interplay between information and personal belief systems can lead to a transformative process of understanding and engagement that shapes the very fabric of society.

Historically, governments and authorities have sought to control the flow of information to shape societal and cultural values in accordance with their own political agendas. This manipulation of information often reflects the ideological stance of the ruling regime, as seen in various authoritarian countries where dissenting voices are suppressed. Despite strict regulations, censorship, or outright bans on popular digital platforms—including social media and independent news websites—many citizens in these repressive environments have found ways to bypass these restrictions. Utilising tools such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and virtual local area networks (VLANs), they can access uncensored information and diverse perspectives. This technological empowerment allows them to explore alternative ideas, engage

with global discourse, and ultimately seek a broader understanding of the world beyond the confines of their government's narrative.

Freedom of speech, along with the freedom to read and write, forms the cornerstone of democratic societies and is vital for expressing diverse opinions. These fundamental rights enable individuals not only to articulate their thoughts but also to engage deeply with others' ideas. By fostering an environment where various perspectives can thrive, these freedoms facilitate the contemplation and rationalisation of personal worldviews, thereby enriching public discourse. The ability to exchange ideas and challenge established beliefs is crucial for societal progress. Throughout history, ideological debates have driven transformative change, allowing marginalised voices to emerge and shape cultural norms. Knowledge is a powerful tool that empowers individuals worldwide to question injustices and advocate for positive change. In the early stages of intellectual inquiry, individuals often grapple with prevailing notions and potentially controversial subjects, prompting discussions that can lead to significant advancements. Free speech and public discourse are imperative to a cohesive society in the long run.

As more people engage in these dialogues, we can anticipate the emergence of a larger cohort of well-informed and well-minded world citizens, equipped with critical thinking skills and a nuanced understanding of complex issues, as debate deepens across the world's regions. This evolution not only enhances the quality of public discourse but also strengthens the democratic fabric of society, fostering a climate of openness and mutual respect that is essential for collective progress, peace and co-existence.

As John Tosh asserted, "The common factor is that history is the property of 'the public' rather than academia, in the sense that the laity are the principal audience."<sup>xvi</sup> At this critical moment, amid an overwhelming flow of information, both academics and enthusiasts across all fields of knowledge

must take an active role in guiding this information revolution. We should not passively allow alternative news sources to become the dominant forces in our information landscape. It seems that experts from various fields, whether intentionally or unintentionally, tend to avoid the intense, tribal, and sometimes demeaning debates on the internet. Instead, their activities mainly focus on campuses and seminars, where most participants are academics who share similar rational views on the progress of civilisation. The recent shift of Twitter to X has caused a significant move towards threads or BlueSky among experts. Despite this, X remains the trendsetter for social and political debates, and although it can be toxic, most social, cultural, and political discussions are published on X and then scrutinised elsewhere. Still, many academics and knowledge enthusiasts pay for yearly subscriptions to X to access a Blue Tick and combat misinformation and disinformation. It is a selfless commitment to supporting knowledge and knowledge-based institutions.

Social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Threads, and BlueSky play an essential role in enabling discussions and spreading information. These platforms allow users from various backgrounds to share their thoughts and participate in conversations on a broad range of topics, from current affairs to personal experiences. However, it is evident that not all users follow the expected standards of respectful interaction. Rather than encouraging constructive dialogue, many choose to express their personal opinions or engage in personal attacks, often shifting attention away from the main issues. This behaviour diminishes the quality of the conversation and can discourage meaningful exchanges, emphasising the importance of users acting with civility and focusing on ideas rather than individuals in their interactions. Participants in debates and discussions come from a wide range of ethnic, racial, and demographic backgrounds, each possessing different levels of knowledge and education. As a result, interactions in digital media differ from those in traditional lectures and seminars. The goal of this experience is to combat

misinformation, provide personal insights into the diverse demographics of global citizens, and engage in respectful debates.

## Summary

The rise in population and affluence has prompted developing countries to establish more educational institutions, leading to a swift increase in literacy rates. However, many of those who become educated do not learn the true, coherent, and connected history of our civilisation; instead, their understanding is often shaped by ideological and regional biases and strictly controlled by the authorities' narratives. Similarly, in the West, educated citizens are divided along liberal and conservative lines, which complicates the education system and results in a fractured understanding of history and society. In the United States, these ideological divisions are so entrenched that each blue (Democratic) and red (Republican) state has developed its own educational curriculum. Furthermore, presidents are often elected based on policies that reflect their personal biases rather than being grounded in conviction and rational argument, which were once fundamental to America's democracy.<sup>xvii</sup>

As mentioned, the invention of the printing press and its role in social, cultural, economic, and political transformations in Europe and beyond after the second half of the fifteenth century was immense, shaping future generations. It's clear that the advent of the internet and digital media will have similar effects, but it's still too early to tell, as these developments are in their early stages, and ongoing discussions and debates continue. Public history and expert involvement are vital to guiding this debate for greater clarity.

## Conclusion

The world is undergoing a significant, rapid transformation, driven by billions of individuals who each play a crucial role in this change. Everyone brings their own unique perspectives and worldviews, shaped by a mix of personal

knowledge, life experiences, and cultural backgrounds. Geography also matters, as it influences how communities are organised and how people connect with one another. Additionally, individual beliefs—whether derived from religion, philosophy, or personal experiences—add further diversity to these viewpoints. Engaging with this range of perspectives is key not only to understanding the global landscape but also to building meaningful connections and working together across cultures and societies. As we navigate a more dynamic and multicultural world, it's more important than ever to embrace these diverse viewpoints.

All humans are deeply interconnected through our shared ancestry. Our collective history is a legacy passed down from our ancestors, enriched by diverse cultures and eras that have ultimately shaped modern civilisation. Public history should play a vital role in reinforcing the idea that humans are one interconnected entity, reflecting our evolutionary background rooted in historical knowledge and anthropology. This approach should foster constructive discussions while avoiding the deep divisions often caused by cultural and ideological conflicts. Bringing historical truths to light through artefacts, data, statistics, presentations, and activism can help the public better understand our world. Experts from various fields are crucial in the fight against misinformation and disinformation, especially in today's fast-evolving digital landscape. Public historians, anthropologists, and other professionals can make a significant impact by actively engaging with digital media platforms, scrutinising circulating information, and confronting inaccuracies directly. By promoting the dissemination of accurate, evidence-based facts, they can help counter false narratives that often emerge during times of societal upheaval. The rapid development of digital media, fuelled by advances in artificial intelligence, has brought additional challenges. As AI improves content creation, curation, and distribution, issues like misinformation, privacy concerns, and the digital divide have become more pressing. At this pivotal

point, public history stands as the key tool to steer these changes in a positive direction, with experts playing a crucial role in explaining historical knowledge of the development of our civilisation to the public and guiding AI inputs to foster a peaceful and inclusive world.

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<sup>i</sup> Kenny, Kevin, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), P.17

<sup>ii</sup> Headrick, Daniel R., *Technology: A World History* (Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 1-16

<sup>iii</sup> Tosh, John, *Why History Matters*, p.x.

<sup>iv</sup> Middle Ages knew all about fake news and misinformation' *University of Winchester* (2025) <<https://www.winchester.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Press-Centre/Media-Articles/Middle-Ages-knew-all-about-fake-news-and-misinformation.php>> (accessed 7 December 2025).

<sup>v</sup> Takumi Naito, 'An asymmetric Melitz model of trade and growth, *Economics Letters*' Vol. 158 (2017) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econlet.2017.06.016>.

<sup>vi</sup> Tyrel C. Eskelson, 'States, Institutions, and Literacy Rates in Early-Modern Western Europe' (2021) <<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1290524.pdf>>.

<sup>vii</sup> Number of internet and social media users worldwide as of October 2025' Statista (2025) <<https://www.statista.com/statistics/617136/digital-population-worldwide/#:-:text=Number%20of%20internet%20and%20social,general%20population%20C%20ranking%20last%20worldwide.>> [accessed 7 December 2025].

<sup>viii</sup> Radical' BBC 4 <<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DRjP4YsDLH0/>>.

<sup>ix</sup> Tosh John, *Why History Matters* (Palgrave, 2008).

<sup>x</sup> How political polling shapes public opinion' *BBC News* (2015) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-31504146>> [accessed 7 December 2025].

<sup>xi</sup> More than 90% of UK population have encountered misinformation online' the Alan Turing Institutes (2024) <<https://www.turing.ac.uk/news/more-90-uk-population-have-encountered-misinformationonline#::-:text=Filed%20under,content%20they%20are%20presented%20with.>> [accessed 7 December 2025].

<sup>xii</sup> Fu Diana 'Distinguish Foreign Influence from Foreign Interference: Policymakers and the media often conflate very different activities—disciplined distinction is crucial to U.S. national security and the safety of Asian Americans' *John Hopkins Online* <<https://acf.sais.jhu.edu/distinguish-foreign->

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