

From Cuneiform To Computers



Mark McArthur-Christie

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Illustrated by Martin Aston, Kathy Baxendale, Stefan Chabluk, John Holder, and James Sneddon

U.S. edit by **Alison Auch**

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This Americanized Edition of *From Cuneiform to Computers*, originally published in England in 2002, is published by arrangement with Oxford University Press.

08 07 06 05 04
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Published by

Pacific Learning

P.O. Box 2723

Huntington Beach, CA 92647-0723

www.pacificlearning.com

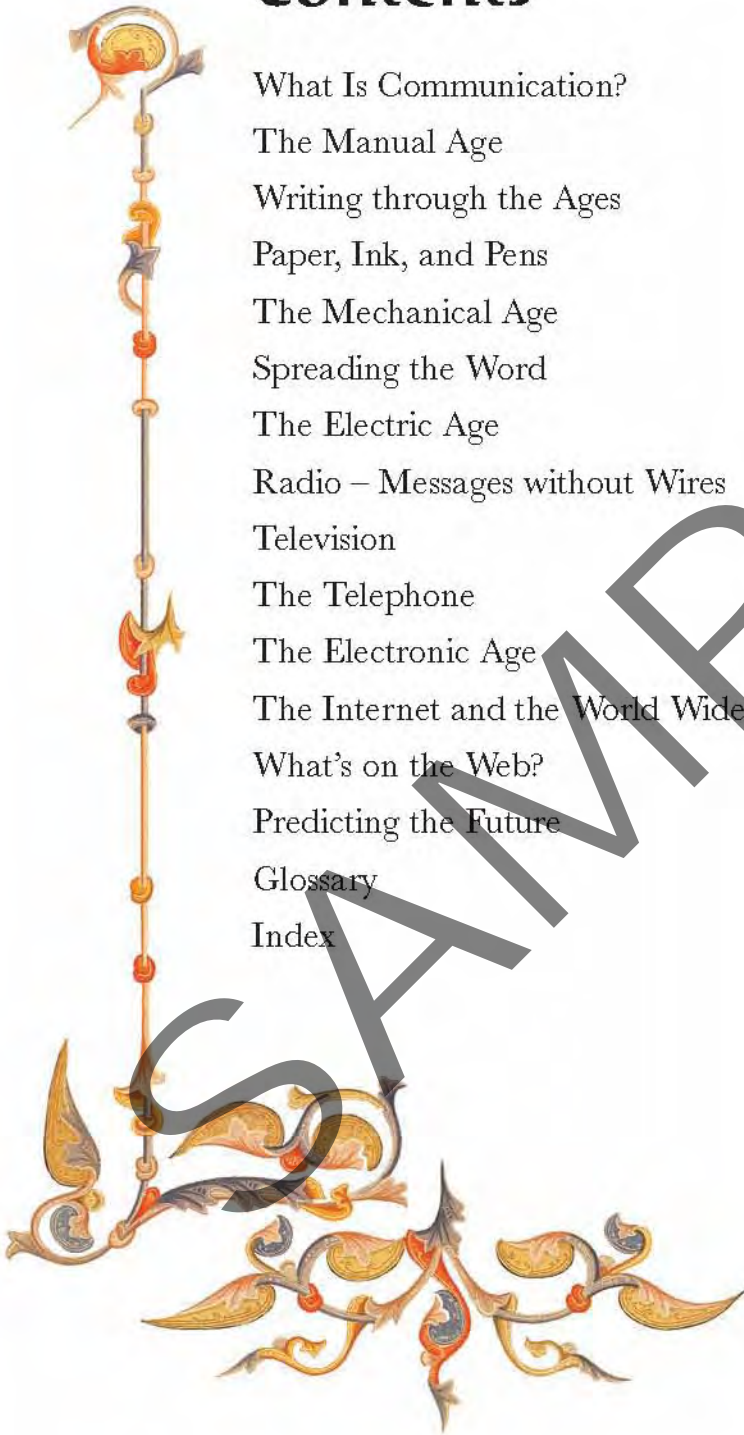
ISBN: 1-59055-435-3

PL-7521

Printed in China.

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What Is Communication?

When people make contact with each other and send messages, we say they are “communicating” with each other. They write letters with pen and paper, use computers to send e-mail, and talk on the telephone. They watch programs on TV and listen to the radio. All of these innovative things were invented by someone!

The Four Ages of Communication

This book is about communication and the communication inventions that changed the world. It divides the history of communication into four ages:

THE MANUAL AGE 5 BC–AD 1454

During the Manual Age, when people wanted to send information over long distances, they had to write it down. Some civilizations did not have a system of writing, so they communicated in different ways.



▲ A monk writing a manuscript

DID YOU KNOW?

Old Words Today

The word “manual” comes from the Latin word “manus,” which means “hand.”

THE MECHANICAL AGE

1455–1837

This era began with the invention of printing and newspapers. People used printing machines to help them communicate with more people and more quickly.

◀ William Caxton, in 1474, demonstrating his new printing press to King Edward IV in London



THE ELECTRIC AGE 1838–1937

By harnessing electricity, the telegraph, the telephone, and early radios and televisions let people communicate using sound, as well as pictures, over long distances.

A telegraph key ▶



THE ELECTRONIC AGE 1938–TODAY

Satellites, computers, the Internet, and e-mail enable you to communicate with people, almost instantly, all over the world.



▲ The computer has become an important communication tool.

HOW DOES COMMUNICATION WORK?

Communication needs at least two people to make it work: a sender and a receiver. Successful communication depends on the sender making the message clear and the receiver understanding it.



▲ You can see clearly what this police officer wants you to do, even though you cannot hear him.

You communicate almost all the time – sometimes even when you don't know it. You communicate aloud when you speak, when you laugh, and when you shout. You can do it silently too, when you smile or frown. Even what you wear communicates something about you.