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Getting the message: a history of communications

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Abstrak

The history of communications is a branch of the history of technology but, strictly speaking, it is in a category of its own. The goods produced by technology, whether a piece of machinery, a piece of clothing or a piece of furniture, are tangible: they perform some useful function. The goods produced by communications are messages. They are mostly useless but when they are useful they can be very, very useful. For that reason communications has always been regarded as a good thing by all peoples at all times. Even in prehistoric times a tribal chief of average intelligence would have easily appreciated both the military and economic implications.