Before we count on various forms of mass media and its impact on the growth of societies and its importance in the contemporary world, it is pertinent to see in little more detail how it all began under circumstances which seem difficult to believe in modern times.

Mankind has always been interested in knowing about the physical things around and the ideas on the human life as structured by the intellectuals of the day. The only problem was the missing link of mass medium which should work as a conduit to transport feelings of scholars to others.

There is no trace available as how people from distant territories would exchange views and information by the sixth century. There is a general impression that it would have been through the travelers and war expeditions that might fetch information about far flung parts of the world. But traveling was no easy business and in the absence of maps and knowledge of geography and routes only few would dare to explore the world and return safely back to their hometown. Since recorded history is not available of those times it is left only to our imagination how mass communication would have been going around the civilizations which were old and developed enough to assume a shape of an organized society.

The availability of languages was only ample to accomplish the task of limited scale inter-personal communication. Sending a message to many was still an enigma.

A breakthrough was made by the invention of paper but it was still far from the concept of mass communication.

**Books –**

first fascination towards mass media It is not known as what the first book was or when exactly it saw light of the day. Traces are available to say with some certainty that in the 7th century people had some idea about books. Though scant and written on very limited topics, these books can be symbolized as the pioneer in mass communication as they were able, though on a very limited scale, to carry message to many others irrespective of cast, color, religion, rich or poor.

Four early Periods in the History of the Books

• 7th to 13th Century: The age of religious "manuscript" book production. Books in this period are entirely constructed by hand, and are largely religious texts whose creation is meant as an act of worship.

• 13th to 15th Century: The secularization of book production. Books are beginning to be produced that do not serve as objects of worship, but that try to explain something about the observable world. The difficulty with the spread of such knowledge was that production is still taking place via pre-print - manuscript - methods.

The production of secular books is driven by two things: The rise of universities in Europe, spreading from Italy. The return of the crusaders in the 13th century, who bring with them texts from Byzantium. These books, written during the Greek and Roman periods in history, focus on this-world concerns.

• 15th to 16th Century: The first printed books. These are print versions of traditional works like the Bible, books of hours (prayer books) and the religious calendars.

• 16th to 17th Century: New information is put into books that have important consequences on European life and society.

Book - from hand-written to printing The 7th to the 9th century was the heyday of the "illuminated manuscript". Production of these works took place in the monasteries scattered across Europe. These religious retreats were the repositories of those texts of Greece and Rome which survived in Europe. Monks in the monasteries made copies of the books in their care - both religious and secular manuscripts. However, they did not contribute much more to the advancement of that intellectual tradition, because they were not engaged in thinking about the relationship between the works in their care and the world outside the monastery.

During this time, the production of Bibles was the place where the arts of the monastic scribes, and later lay artists, flowered. It was here that the most elaborate and beautiful illumination found its outlet and the manuscript books from this period represent the height of the art of decoration.

**Ancient history of printing**

The original method of printing was block printing, pressing sheets of paper into individually carved wooden blocks. It is believed that block printing originated in China, and the earliest known printed text, the Diamond Sutra (a Buddhist scripture, was printed in China in 868 A.D.) The technique was also known in Europe, where it was mostly used to print Bibles. Because of the difficulties inherent in carving massive quantities of minute text for every block, and given the levels of peasant illiteracy at the time, texts such as the "Pauper's Bibles" emphasized illustrations and used words sparsely. As a new block had to be carved for each page, printing different books was an incredibly time consuming activity.

Moveable clay and metal type are processes much more efficient than hand copying. The use of movable type in printing was invented in 1041 AD by Bi Sheng in China. Bi used clay type, which broke easily, but eventually Goryeo (Korea) sponsored the production of metal type (a type foundry was established by the Korean government in the early 15th century). Since there are thousands of Chinese characters (Koreans also used Chinese characters in literature), the benefit of the technique is not as apparent as with alphabetic based languages.

Movable type did spur, however, additional scholarly pursuits in China and facilitated more creative modes of printing. Nevertheless, movable type was never extensively used in China until the European style printing press was introduced.

**From China to Germany**

Although probably unaware of the Chinese/Korean printing methods (with substantial evidence for both sides of argument), Gutenberg refined the technique with the first widespread use of movable type, where the characters are separate parts that are inserted to make the text. Gutenberg is also credited with the first use of an oil-based ink, and using "rag" paper introduced into Europe from China by way of Muslims, who had a paper mill in operation in Baghdad as early as 794. Before inventing the printing press in 1440s, Gutenberg had worked as a goldsmith. Without a doubt, the skills and knowledge of metals that he learned as a craftsman were crucial to the later invention of the press.

The claim that Gutenberg introduced or invented the printing press in Europe is not accepted by all. The other candidate advanced is the Dutchman Laurens Janszoon Coster