

Herbert Marshall McLuhan (July 21, 1911—December 31, 1980) was a Canadian futurist, academic and one of the founders of modern media studies.

He was born to Elsie and Herbert McLuhan in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and raised in a Baptist Scottish-Irish family. He later converted to Roman Catholicism. McLuhan would remain a strong Catholic throughout his career. Some argue that his religion played a heavy role in his philosophical studies.

McLuhan became a pop culture figure in the 1960s with the publication of *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (McGraw-Hill, 1964) and *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (with designer Quentin Fiore, Random House, 1967).

Famous for coining the phrases "The medium is the message" (he later published a book whose title was a play on this phrase—*The Medium is the Massage*) and "the global village", McLuhan became one of the early purveyors of the sound bite. He asserted that each different medium is an extension of the senses that affects the individual and society in distinct and pervasive ways, further classifying some media as "hot"—media which engage one's senses in a high-intensity, exclusive way, such as typography, radio, and film—and other media as "cool"—media of lower resolution or intensity, that require more interaction from the viewer, such as the telephone and the television. While many of his pronouncements and theories have been considered impenetrable, and by some absurd, McLuhan's central message—that to understand today's world, one must actively study the effects of media—remains ever more true in the electronic age. *Wired Magazine* named McLuhan its "patron saint" when the magazine launched in 1993.

In his seminal work, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (1964), Marshall McLuhan allegedly coined the term "software" (though the Merriam-Webster dictionary traces usage of the word back to 1960).

The phrase "global village" was coined by McLuhan in 1959, and appears in 1962's *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan's study of the psychological and cognitive effects of standardised printing. See [/GlobalVillage](#) and [/GutenbergGalaxy](#).

Marshall McLuhan died December 31, 1980 of a cerebral stroke which rendered him speechless during the last year of his life.