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<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Darunee Hirunrak.</td>
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Communication Arts Research In Thailand 1980-1988

By

Darunee Hirunrak
COMMUNICATION ARTS RESEARCH

(1980-1988)
Communication Arts Research in Thailand

DR. DARUKEE HIRUNRAK

When the history of communications in the past is taken into consideration, it is seen that in addition to interpersonal communication, which relies on spoken language, written language and gestures, Thai society has imported almost all communication technologies or mass media of various sorts from foreign countries. That is: the business of printing and issuing newspapers was introduced in the reign of King Mongkut; subsequently, still photography and moving photography were introduced in the reign of King Chulalongkorn; radio broadcasting was introduced in the reign of King Prachadhipok (about 60 years ago), and television broadcasting was introduced in the reign of the present King. However, with respect to the various mass communication businesses introduced into Thailand, only princes and a group of noblemen enjoyed opportunities for these things and had the ability to apply them.

Studies in communication arts or communications at the level of high education or at the level of vocational education just began to appear at later times when there appeared to be a greater social need for them. For instance, Chulalongkorn University offered the course of certificate in journalism for the first time in 1939. Subsequently, the course was closed down and twice reopened before the undergraduate course in the independent Section of Mass Media Communication and Public Relations came into existence in 1965. At that time, Thammasat University had already been teaching the journalism subject in the Faculty of Social Sciences since 1954. Subsequently, in 1969, the status of the course was changed to the independent Section of Journalism and Mass Media Communication. Chiangmai University also began to open a course in mass media communication by beginning to teach the mass media communication subject in the Faculty of Humanities in 1964, and it gained the status of Department of
Mass Media Communication in 1968. Meanwhile, Ramkamhaeng University has been teaching the communication subject in the Faculty of Humanities and Education and the advertising subject in the Faculty of Business Administration since 1977.

Therefore, it is obvious that it has been more than 100 years since the birth of communication technology in Thailand. As regards studies in communication or information arts, the courses just began to be offered 44 years ago. That is why in early years Thailand had to rely in large part on foreign countries for various knowledges, and it is about 20 years ago when awareness in the mass media communication area began to grow. The importance of mass media communication began to be perceived and accepted. This led to the rise of article writing, textbook writing and more active searching for knowledges in this matter in various forms like holding seminars, publishing journals and pamphlets and, importantly, attention began to be increasingly paid to studying and researching about mass media communication, which accounts for the quick expansion of the amassing of knowledges and technologies in mass media communication over the past period of about 20 years. Today, these are reflected in a great number of journalistic printed materials and documents.

Awareness in the communication area, whether arising in the academic circle or the professional circle, is a good omen. It indicates that Thai society has amassed experiences and knowledges at a level and is ready to enlarge the scope of searching. The assortment of printed materials of communication arts and documents done at the present time by arranging them into groups and indices is something new and represents an important step of knowledge amassing. That is, when the names of such printed materials and documents are gathered together, that will enable persons in the communication arts circle themselves and persons interested in this field of technical matters to see the progress and growth of Thailand's activities in the communication arts area. Research works of this
nature is of great importance to new subject fields because the latter call for accelerate studying and researching along with the directions of developments in various knowledges and also for knowledges in lines that are consistent with the present society's needs and increasingly complicated situations.

The research work entitled Index of Printed Media in Communication Arts compiled by Umolwan Pitiphatnakhosit for the purpose of collecting the names of printed materials of all types in the subject field of communication arts and arranging them into an index as a source from which to search for data in the interest of studies and to learn about data on the numbers of printed materials of various subject fields dealing with communication arts, types of printed material, which subject fields having a good number of or a lack in printed materials so as to determine how to promote suitable increases in production or research.

As to the researching method, data were explored from libraries of 12 institutes of higher education in both the central and provincial parts, dealing with only printed materials of communication arts prepared in Thailand during 1985-1989 and propagated in those library.

With respect to the substance, all the explored printed materials were assorted into 11 subject fields of communication arts. Each subject field consisted of various titles, totalling 39 titles, the details being as follows:

1. General communication - from printed materials with substances dealing with general communication, communication arts and communication theories, consisting of the following titles: communication, communication and language usage, communication and mind-influencing, communication and planning and policy, communication and technology and telecommunication, communication and business, family communication, organization communication, interpersonal communication, and communication arts: learning and instruction.

2. Advertising - from printed materials dealing with all aspects of advertising.
3. Developmental communication arts - from printed materials with substances dealing with putting communication into involvement with other businesses, consisting of the following titles: communication and agriculture, communication and tourism, communication and development, communication and politics, communication and education, communication and society, and communication and public health.

4. Television and video tapes - from printed materials with substances dealing with television and video tapes (video tapes, television tapes), consisting of the following titles: television, television and education, television and youths, and video tapes.

5. Public Relations - from printed materials dealing with all aspects of public relations.

6. Still pictures and moving pictures - from printed materials with substances dealing with still pictures and moving pictures, consisting of the following titles: photography, cartoons and movies.

7. Speech-making art - from printed materials with substances dealing with all aspects of speech.

8. Journalism - from printed materials with substances dealing with newspapers and printed materials of various types, including printing, consisting of the following titles: printing, news, newspapers, magazines and printed materials.

9. Radio and re diffusion - from printed materials with substances dealing with radio and similar media, i.e. re diffusion.

10. Mass media - from printed materials dealing with mass media as a whole, not dealing with any particular medium separately, consisting of the following titles: mass media, mass media and children, and mass media and women.

11. Performance communication - from printed materials with substances dealing with plays and shows, including indigenous media.
The printed materials in each of these titles would be assorted into 5 types: newspapers, theses, research reports, seminar reports and pamphlets.

The research findings can be summarized as follows: The total number of the printed materials was 696 items divided by type of printed material as follows: newspaper, 271 items; thesis 283 items; research work, 85 items; seminar reports, 25 items, and pamphlet, 52 items. From dividing these into 11 major subject fields, it was found that the subject fields with the largest numbers of printed materials were: developmental communication arts, 17.6 per cent; journalism, 13.4 per cent, and general communication, 12.1 per cent respectively; the subject fields with the smallest numbers of printed materials were: speech-making art and performance communication, 4.2 per cent. If assorting by type of printed material, the subject field of still pictures and moving pictures had the largest number printed materials, 14 per cent; the subject field of mass media had the smallest number of printed materials, 2.2 per cent; whereas theses in the field of developmental communication arts had the greatest number, 33.9 per cent, while speech-making had none. As regards research reports, journalism had the largest number, 23.5 per cent and speech-making art had none. As regards seminar reports, the field of general communication had the largest number, 24 per cent; but speech-making art, still pictures and moving pictures had none; as regards pamphlets, the subject field of television and video tapes had the largest number, 18 per cent; but speech-making art and performance communication had none.
The related research works collected were as follows:

In 1978, Nanthawan Suchato and Rawiwan Prakobphon collected research works on the communication policy, which were some of the documents of the seminar entitled National Communication Policy held on May 10-12, 1978. What they did was collecting printed materials which were reports on research works in communication arts together with the abstract of each of a total of 33 items for use in researching purposes referring to the making of the national communication policy.

In 1983, there was a research work of Ubonwan Pitiphathanakhesit and Ubonrat Siriyuvasak entitled "Surveying and Indexing Printed Materials on Communication Arts in Thailand, 1957-1982", which was a work of surveying and collecting all printed materials on communication arts (except articles from journals) from the initial age up to 1982 when technical matters of communication arts had already become widely known and formed a subject field to which various groups were paying much attention. The two persons surveyed printed materials of all kinds and in all fields of communication arts, such as research works, theses, treatises, books, documents, pamphlets, seminar documents and journals, assigning them according to 25 titles dealing with communication arts, such as photography, printing, communication, and communication and various aspects like communication and agriculture, communication and politics, interpersonal communication, news, advertising, television, radio, public relations, motion pictures, mass communication, plays and shows, etc.

Subsequently, in 1984, there was a collection of articles on communication from journals by Ubonwan Pitiphathanakhesit and Nitaya Lekkaew entitled "Index of Thai Communication Arts Journals" for the period of 1953-1983, as long as 30 years, which they collected from only magazines dealing with communication arts,
such as Khon Khosana, Nithetsarn, Nisit Naksuksa, Wan Nakkhao, Varasarn Nithetsart, Varasarnsart, Varasarn Suemuanchon, Varasarn Sor.Nor.Thor., and memory annuals of the Faculty of Communication Art, totalling 891 articles.

The research findings can be summarized as follows:

The total number of the surveyed printed materials was 696 items, broken down into details as follows: (see Table)

1. Books:
   - Still pictures and moving pictures, ranking 1st in quantity, 14 per cent
   - General communication, ranking 2nd in quantity, 12.5 per cent
   - Television and video tapes, ranking 3rd in quantity, 12.2 per cent
   - Mass media, ranking lowest in quantity, 2.2 per cent

2. Theses:
   - Developmental communication arts, ranking 1st in quantity, 27.9 per cent
   - Still pictures and moving pictures, ranking 2nd in quantity, 14.8 per cent
   - Television and video tapes, ranking 3rd in quantity, 12.3 per cent
   - Performance communication, ranking lowest in quantity, 1.8 per cent
   - Speech-making art, none at all

3. Research works:
   - Journalism, ranking 1st in quantity, 23.5 per cent
   - General communication and developmental communication arts, ranking 2nd in quantity, 15.3 per cent
   - Mass media, ranking 3rd in quantity, 14.1 per cent
   - Radio and rediffusion, ranking lowest in quantity, 3.5 per cent
   - Speech-making art, none at all
4. Seminar reports:

- General communication, ranking 1st in quantity, 24 per cent
- Television and video tapes, ranking 2nd in quantity, 16 per cent
- Advertising, developmental communication arts, ranking 3rd in quantity, 12 per cent
- Public relations and mass communication, speech-making art, still pictures and moving pictures, none at all

5. Pamphlets:

- Television and video tapes, ranking 1st in quantity, 18.1 per cent
- General communication, ranking 2nd in quantity, 15.6 per cent
- Advertising, public relations, journalism, radio and rediffusion, ranking 3rd in quantity, 12.5 per cent
- Speech-making art and performance communication, none at all.

The subject fields with the largest numbers of printed materials were:
- developmental communication arts, 17.8 per cent; journalism, 13.4 per cent, and general communication, 12.1 per cent respectively.

The subject fields with the smallest number of printed materials were:
- speech-making art and performance communication, 4.2 per cent.

Observations derived from this research:

1. Of the total number of books surveyed, one half was found to be academic textbook because Sukhothai Thammathirat University, which is an open university, began to offer an undergraduate course and efforts were pooled to write textbooks on all fields of communication arts, which were formerly high in demand. In addition, books in general were not quite academic but could provide knowledge and experience, for example, as to how public relations work is done, successful A.T.'s or reference books for data research, such as business advertisement directories or books dealing with communication policies and plans.
2. The majority of the theses were at the graduate level and the reason why these in the field of developmental communication arts were in a large number is because there were graduate students studying this subject field at two institutions: Chulalongkorn University and Thammasat University. In addition to that, there were also students of other subject fields who worked out theses on use of media or communication, such as the field of sociology, the fields of public health, community development, agriculture, education, etc.

3. Research works: most of the researchers were instructors from various institutes and most of the research works were historical research ones. The rest were investigative research works, which were few.

4. Seminar reports: they were few all there was none in some subject fields because in some seminars there were accompanying document, in others there was none at all, and some seminars or their results were not publicized, which made it impossible to research on and refer to them.

5. Pamphlets: they were found to be few because most people do not prefer publishing pamphlets. In certain cases, when pamphlets have been published on specific occasions they are not maintained for reference or research.
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