

How Email impacted on society

During the whole epoch of history till nowadays, the main way of non-verbal communication was writing. With the help of writing, social groups, tribes, nations used to (and still do) transfer their thoughts, immigrate the ideas and spread information from themselves to other social groups, tribes, nations that used to be actual for that period of time. But writing does not necessarily consist of a collection of words, phrases and sentences. It is a historically proven fact that in ancient times, one tribes used to share information with each other with the help of cave paintings, rock art and even more. With the help of these paintings and art, they used to warn each other on the coming enemy, spread information about trading with each other, share locations and more. Basically speaking, these paintings were some kind of ritual in terms of communication that represented the social rituals as a whole.

For example, when I hear keywords such as “tribes”, “writing” and “cave”, I immediately remember the main national park of my homeland, Azerbaijan, which is called Gobustan National Park. The first and foremost feature of this place is the rock carvings and sketches that are ancient of dancing people, scenes from battlefields, animals, specific cultural dances, fights of cows, conversations, pictures of stars and sun. According to Wikipedia, “...the language of the ancient population of Gobustan is disputed, but the petroglyphs still give information about the lives of prehistoric people who lived there. More than 4,000 pictures of animals, humans, natural life experiences, hunting, and dancing were carved over a span of thousands of years. Most of the petroglyphs are on large cliffs, divided among multiple ancient residences, and in some cases they have been carved over older images. The first carvings depicted natural human and animal figures, often irregularly, but over time they began to more closely resemble the measurements and proportions of their subjects, including such details as the foot muscles of people in hunting scenes. The heads of the human figures tend to be small and carved without noses, mouths, eyes, or ears. However, experts do not interpret this lack of facial features as an indication that the Gobustan artists lacked technical skill, since some of the carvings demonstrate a higher degree of complexity and detail. Many scenes from tribal life are depicted among the petroglyphs, and images from the Seven Beauties cave suggest that women may have participated in hunting.” (Wikipedia, Gobustan National Park, 2020). Here we can see that these drawings, in fact, demonstrate how different social groups applied their rituals and habits on the practise. With the help of these drawings, people used to communicate with others. Thanks to them, we can see the lifestyle and, basically, the impact of different factors of events on the society and its factors on the society social groups and tribes that used to live in Azerbaijan 5,000-20,000 years ago. And, most probably, these drawings represent not only the society of Azerbaijan, but the whole Caucasus in this period of time.

Now, time has passed, no one writes notes and mails on envelopes (almost no one) and draws figures in the rocks and stones. Nowadays, in the era of digitalization, everyone uses emails for any kind of communication in any field whether it is academic chatting, texting with the colleague (where you should additionally follow work ethic) or basic communication with a friend. From here, we can connect email and sketching in the craves and say that both of it works based on the same technique, only the way of performing it changed dramatically.

Nevertheless, when it comes to modernity, we all write emails in some specific way in accordance to our backgrounds or the backgrounds of our conversationalist, to our language, our culture and more. You can read the email of the junior worker in a small startup in London and then skim another email written by the head of department of the big IT company in Moscow, and will see the difference right away. In the case of a worker from London, you will observe, firstly, polite greetings, respectful formulation of the statements. The interesting thing is that foreigners who work with the people from London, even created a term for their emails called “sh*t sandwich”. Example of this way of communication firstly begins with polite greeting then comes asking about how the person feels, how his/her is doing, what was new on weekends. Next is validation of his/her work which is one side of the sandwich. Only after all these stages actually reporting bad news, complain or any other unsatisfactory fact which is the terminology of “sh*t sandwich” is actually sh*t itself. Next is closing the email with the wishing all good and best regards which is the last side of the sandwich. At the same time, when it comes to the head of department of the big IT company in Moscow who is supposed to be extremely polite in business consultation and well-familiar with the work ethics, in fact, would communicate extremely dry and even rude. That person in most cases would used to be strict and straightforward, and do not prefer to spend (or he/she would say waste) time on formalities like greetings, asking on the conditions of the recipient or wishing him/her good weekends. Or when it comes to the emotional conditions of the email, Russian head workers would only put an exclamation mark in the greeting without any emoji or distracting joke or encouraging statement in the email whilst Londoner would be generous with a joke or even a compliment. Everyone decides for himself/herself which way of communicating is better and acceptable, but when it comes to me, I had a chance to work with both sides, I would prefer to get a generous compliment rather than a dry exclamation mark.

But we cannot blame either Londender or Muscovite for their specific attitude. Everything that they are doing in modern life is impacted or even based on their country's past. When it comes to Londoner, he, in most cases, would grow up on the novels of Shakespeare or tales about Sherok where you can read definitions on

generosity, politeness and carefulness on treatment to each other from the first pages. But on the other hand, you see a Muscovite who was sleeping on lullabies of his/her grandmother about the war where she was a “medical sister” (in most cases in WWII, which for Russians is the Great Patriotic War). Thus, when you grew up in these different kinds of backgrounds, it is obvious that your lifestyle and mindset would be different during the process of being brought up.

From this point of view, we can recall this process of “collective memory”. As for the term, Oxford Biographies says that “collective memory encompasses both the shared frameworks that shape and filter ostensibly “individual” or “personal” memories and representations of the past sui generis, including official texts, commemorative ceremonies, and physical symbols such as monuments and memorials.” (Oxford Bibliographies, Collective memory, 2019) The term was mostly invented and traces its origins to Émile Durkheim and also to his friend, Maurice Halbwachs. Basically, Russians of the current generation either saw the troubles of the war or heard about them tons of time. Therefore, it impacted on their life massively and this impact reflects on the way these people are communication (strict and straightforward), way they are wearing their clothes (in most cases they wear black tops and bottoms thus they would not be noticeable in the crowd as it should be in the war) and even more. But when it comes to the Londoners, everyone can say their difference in contrary to Russians right away: Londoners are more polite both non-verbal and verbal communication at the same time they are trying to be noticeable, wear colorful jeans and tops just like Macbeth or Othello wear. Even though, it does not mean that Londoners do not know a problem, on the contrary, they have plenty of traumas from the past, including WWII, nevertheless, they do not focus and highlight them, especially when it comes to the bringing up of the children.

When it comes to emails, again, in an article from Veeting it asks, who would have thought 100 or even 20 years ago that we can communicate and collaborate in real-time like we can today, with the only burden being available bandwidth and time zones? It seems as if we have reached the end of an evolution, as if what we have now is the final stage of a development that took thousands of years. How can we further improve our means of communication, besides more bandwidth and better encryption for better privacy? (Veeting, The evolution of business communication 2020) Overall, we are all impacted by our past and we project and reflect it on our present habits, on all the things we are creating and thinking about, including writing emails. No things are having an impact on ourselves, on our society, but we and our past.

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