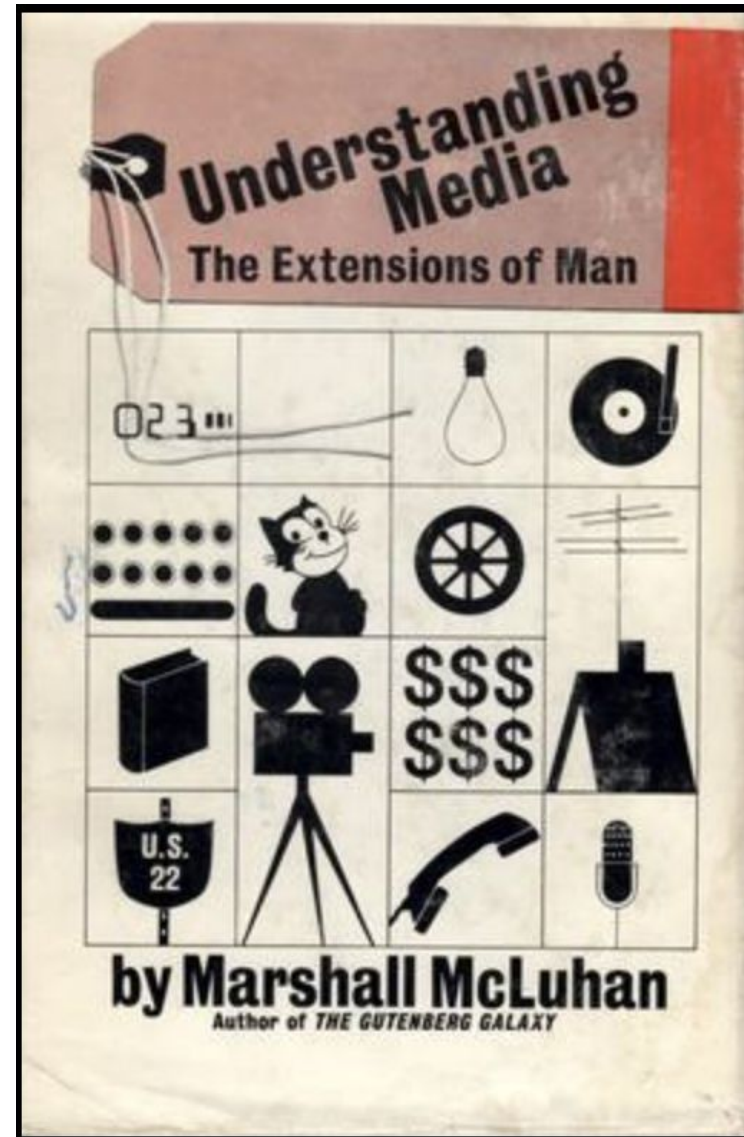


# Media Mechanisms

Christopher Ohge  
School of Advanced Study, University of London  
30 October 2020

# Session Outline

- Defining digital objects
- Storage
- Forensic and Formal Materiality



# Defining Digital Objects

1. Physical: “signs inscribed on a medium” (binary code)
2. Logical: the way that data interact with code to make processes and applications (MS Word)
3. Conceptual: the programs and objects we actually deal with (digital images, PDFs)

(Kenneth Thibodeau, “Overview of Technological Approaches to Digital Preservation ...”, qtd in Kirschenbaum, p. 3.)

# Storage

The *conceptual* aspect of new media focuses on human interaction with applications, digital objects *as experienced*; on the other hand Manovich and Espen Aarseth investigate the interaction between logical and conceptual layers.

Kirschenbaum wants to focus on the physical record—storage, a ‘primal’ media category. User activities and habits change with increasing storage capacity.

What does the materiality of text consist of?

## Forensic v. Formal Materiality (Kirschenbaum, pp. 10–12)

1. Forensic: based on the assumption that no two physical things are exactly alike (principle of individuation), digital inscriptions leave discreet trails in memory devices, tools, etc.
2. Formal: computation is based on bits (1s and 0s), which have no colour, size, weight, etc, and can travel at the speed of light, and bits are symbols with an underlying mathematical ontology; formal materiality is an imposition of several relational states on data sets or digital objects.