

The Idea of the Year

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The electricity is still on. The sky hasn't fallen. The sun hasn't burned us all to a crisp. I admit that at midnight of January 1, 2000, I was one of those people huddled in a room with friends and family, clutching a flashlight and water bottle. We thought that Y2K bug was going to bite us all. What were we so afraid of? We entered the new millennium and since the year 2000 there have been amazing technological advances that have led us to the events of 2010.

Global Communication in the last decade not only amazed and startled us; it also unified us. Specifically, Global Communication allowed us to have more compassionate connections with the world. Global Communication empowered us to share our sense of generosity, humanity, and solidarity, which became more and more important for everyone as the world became more connected. For these reasons, I believe that Global Communication is the idea for 2010.

Let's look at some examples. In 2010 Haiti experienced a devastating earthquake, in Chile thirty-three miners were trapped after a cave-in, and in Tunisia the protest of one brave man sparked a wave of demonstrations. Without the magnitude of the perpetual contact we have across the globe, these events would have played out much differently.

As we saw from the beginning of the year, things were changing. Cell phones had a huge impact. The earthquake hit Haiti on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. Here at Juniata, almost from the second students stepped back on campus after winter break, a committee was formed to organize fundraising efforts, and

all around the world people were doing the same. The morning after the earthquake the Red Cross had already set up a system where people could text the word “Haiti” to 90999 to donate \$10. The Mobile Giving Foundation reported a record of 10,000 text messages per second. Over \$30 million was donated from the texts alone. Billions of dollars in aid, along with food, water, clothing, and medical supplies, were sent to Haiti. People have always been generous, but in 2010 we saw that generosity on a global scale.

Only ten years ago, here in the United States we would have heard about the earthquake hours later, rather than minutes. But today, information sharing is near instantaneous. As such, the sharing of resources is much more feasible. This contributed to the rescue mission in Haiti.

We saw more changes months later, but this time it was through television that the world was connected. The mine collapse in Chile happened on August 5, 2010, at the San Jose copper-gold mine. The story was kept up to date by the minute. People all over the world followed the news, wishing, hoping, and praying that someone would find a way to free these men. In Berlin, Pennsylvania, only two hours away from here, Brandon Fisher and his company Center Rock Inc. stepped up to take the challenge when they heard on the news that the rescue would take until Christmas. They realized that their drill was the key to the rescue mission, and they could do it faster. As they reported on their website on October 13, after thirty-three days of drilling, in the thirty-third week of the year, all thirty-three miners were rescued. Talk about your coincidences.

As we watched, glued to our televisions, we weren’t watching strangers. Those were our families waiting to be reunited with their loved ones. President Barack Obama said it best. “The tears they shed after so much time apart expressed not only their own relief, not only their own joy, but the joy of people everywhere.” In that moment, we had a shared sense of humanity with people we had never met.

Only ten years ago, those men in Copiapo, Chile would have been trapped until Christmas because the technology that was 5000 miles away in Berlin, Pennsylvania might have never reached them. Now those men are going back to their lives. Who knows how these men will go on to change the world?

Any one person can make a lasting impact, as we saw towards the end of 2010 in Tunisia. This time, the Internet had the biggest impact. On December 17, Mohammed Bouazizi was insulted and slapped by a government employee who also confiscated his vegetable cart. He was twenty-six years old and supported himself, his mother, and his sisters, one of whom is a college student. After the governor refused to respond to his complaint, Bouazizi set himself on fire. According to CNN, his protest was the one that sparked the demonstrations in Tunisia, like a single drop of water falling into a pond that causes ripples to unfold. Eventually due to the protests, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali resigned. The images of the protests spread through the Internet and people all over Tunisia showed their solidarity.

Only ten years ago, in 2000, who knows when the images of the protests and police actions would have reached the rest of the world? But with current technology, within days the images were spread through Facebook and YouTube, neither of which had yet been invented in 2000. We are still seeing the impacts of this today—in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen, and of course Egypt, where recently a young man named his daughter Facebook.

So where are we now? Thanks to Global Communication, which has been enabled by leaps and bounds in technology, we are almost everywhere. And yes, if the Internet were to fail it would be more of a disaster now than it would have been in 2000, and not only because we seem to feel the need to check Facebook every day.

Haiti brought out generosity on a scale never before seen.

Chile captured our hearts and our humanity.

Tunisia generated solidarity with people everywhere seeking dignity and freedom.

So no, it is not the end. Global Communication changed our world in 2010. We'll just have to watch and see how it continues to affect our future.