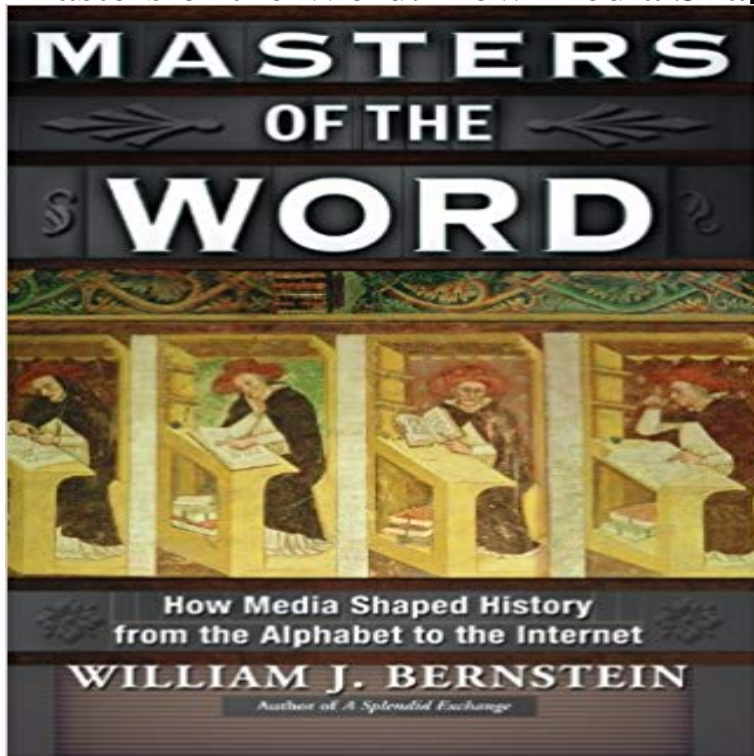


## Masters of the Word: How Media Shaped History



William J. Bernstein's *A Splendid Exchange: How Trade Shaped the World*, an Economist and Financial Times Best Book of the Year, placed him firmly among the top flight of historians like Jared Diamond and Bill Bryson, capable of distilling major trends and reams of information into insightful, globe-spanning popular narrative. Bernstein explains how new communication technologies and in particular our access to them, impacted human society. Writing was born thousands of years ago in Mesopotamia. Spreading to Sumer, and then Egypt, this revolutionary tool allowed rulers to extend their control far and wide, giving rise to the world's first empires. When Phoenician traders took their alphabet to Greece, literacy's first boom led to the birth of drama and democracy. In Rome, it helped spell the downfall of the Republic. Later, medieval scriptoria and vernacular bibles gave rise to religious dissent, and with the combination of cheaper paper and Gutenberg's printing press, the fuse of Reformation was lit. The Industrial Revolution brought the telegraph and the steam-driven printing press, allowing information to move faster than ever before and to reach an even larger audience. But along with radio and television, these new technologies were more easily exploited by the powerful, as seen in Germany, the Soviet Union, even Rwanda, where radio incited genocide. With the rise of carbon duplicates (Russian samizdat), photocopying (the Pentagon Papers), the internet, social media and cell phones (the recent Arab Spring) more people have access to communications, making the world more connected than ever before. In *Masters of the Word*, Bernstein masterfully guides the reader through the vast history of communications, illustrating each step with colorful stories and anecdotes. This is a captivating, enlightening book, one that will change the way you look at

technology, history, and power.

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