Rather than look at the comparisons learning with different media, perhaps motivational effects by varying media might be a useful direction for research in learning with media. Learners have an inherent need to master their environment. What makes them desire a specific medium?

Other areas that might be of interest may be: (1) How learners process information received via a specific medium. (2) The social processes by which learning occurs, (3) strategies and problem-solving using various media, and (4) on a more practical front, cost benefits and cost-effectiveness analysis are worthwhile before making major purchases of new media in an organization. In other words, “What media should I use for certain students, certain tasks, or certain environments that would be most beneficial.

Kozma (1994) suggests that the interaction between information and processes in the mind and those in the environment should be used as a framework to examine the link between media and learning.

Several research approaches also assist in discovering not so much “what works better than what” when learning with media, but instead “what works” and how it does. A marriage of the analytic and systemic approach, according to Saloman (1991), allows identification of causal mechanisms and observation of how those mechanisms interact in complex social situations.

The development of the field cannot continue if research, dialogue and debate does not continue. If even as Clark believes that no one medium is better than another, we should be able to explore different components of media and take advantage of the information gained for several reasons: The first of which is preference. People based on their individual backgrounds, cultures, experiences (or lack thereof), feel more comfortable, (and I dare say Mr. Clark), enjoy different types of media. The second of which is the ability to learn from and create new media. Only then can we continue to be creative and test new ideas and new learning environments. We continue to stretch the capabilities of delivering the same or new information by discovery and implementation.

I particularly enjoyed the paraphrased Teddy Roosevelt quote that we should do all we can, with what we know now, where we are now, with the tools we have now. This statement is apt, because as we grow in capabilities, we should use what we have. To do anything less would be a waste.

On it’s face, the following statement would ring true: Schools would be worse off if half their instructional media disappeared, ONLY if they were utilized in the first place. As some of my classmates have alluded to in previous discussions, the equipment in their classroom is “collecting dust”. At that particular school, no degradation of education will occur. The individuals will maintain the status quo “within their own walls”. That said, when compared to the preparation level of
those who have used the media afforded to them, The students in school #1 will lag behind.

The real world demands that you move forward. As you grow, you will be required to learn and use the media. At home, at church, at school, at an institute of higher learning. Younger students, as well as adults, are at a distinct disadvantage if they do not use the opportunities afforded to them regarding different media.

I cannot buy into the thought that an instructional environment’s educational goals might be more fully realized if media lessened or disappeared altogether. Speaking strictly from a corporate instruction standpoint, it would be largely impossible to have learning take place as efficiently with such a diverse and distributed workforce. The cost to deliver, the drain on resources, and the extended timeline would be a detriment in the marketplace.

Educational institutions that have not made the leap to integrate media associated with distance learning into their curriculum, will eventually suffer for it. Education is still a business. In order to capture the market, they must capture those whose preference it is (because of responsibilities, time constraints, location, etc) to learn at a distance.

While books, manuals and Powerpoint presentations won’t ever go away. The learning medium that is necessary for organizations to remain viable, will be the computer. It is important to incorporate different types of media as appropriate to learner preference, learner needs, and cost effectiveness...especially if Clark is right in his assumption that the vehicle does not in fact matter in the learning outcome.