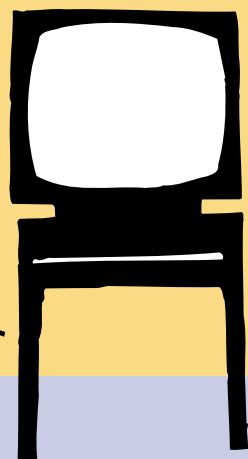


in our



spare time

Aside from going online, the things we do in our spare time are pretty much the same as they were in 1980: watch TV, go to the movies, read, listen to music, follow sports, play a few sports ourselves, and shop 'til we drop. What's changed is the way we do these things.

TV Land

Whether we like to admit it or not, many of us spend a good portion of our spare time watching TV. According to Nielsen Media Research, the average daily viewing time per household rose from 6 hours and 36 minutes in 1980 to 7 hours and 35 minutes in 2000.

And almost everyone has a TV. Between 1980 and 2000, the number of U.S. households with at least one TV set held steady at 98 percent, but the number of multi-set households jumped from 50 percent to 75 percent. Almost 100 percent of all TV households — 99.9 percent to be exact — have at least one color set, up from 83 percent in 1980.

The number of TV households with at least one VCR jumped from 1 percent in 1981 to 91 percent in 2002. And annual sales of DVD players soared from 320,000 in 1997 to 16,700,000 in 2001.

A well-equipped “home entertainment center,” circa 1985, boasted a 19-inch color TV, maybe a VCR, a turntable for vinyl records, a tape player, an amplifier, and a pair of speakers. But by the late 1990s, home entertainment centers had given way to home theaters — a

(very) big-screen TV attached to a state-of-the-art speaker system, a CD player, a DVD player, and a game platform. (The VCR and tape player are still part of the mix, but they aren't getting as much use.)

Other changes in TV land:

- Ted Turner and CNN pioneered 24-hour worldwide news coverage in 1980. (Skeptics wondered who'd watch. Now we know.)
- MTV debuted in 1981.
- Rupert Murdoch launched Fox Broadcasting in 1987. (Two years later, *The Simpsons* hit the airwaves and transformed Fox into a viable fourth network.)

And then there was the explosive growth of cable TV. Less than 20 percent of all U.S. television households had cable service in 1980, and viewers were likely to wonder why anyone would pay to watch television. But by 2002, cable had found its way into nearly 70 percent of all U.S. TV households, and for better or worse it had altered our viewing habits. Programming is more specialized, and audiences are more fragmented. There are cable channels devoted entirely to news, sports, music, weather, cooking, shopping, comedy, cartoons, game shows, travel — you name it. Cable has also undercut the influence of broadcast networks . . . and network censors. The most innovative, influential programs are now on cable, and content is much more graphic than it used to be. Tony Soprano and his pals can say things on TV that we never would have heard in 1980. And as for *Sex in the City* . . . well, in 1980 there wouldn't even have been a show called *Sex in the City*.

Music to Our Ears

“Eight-track tape” was early 1980s shorthand for “loser.” Cool people listened to the smaller cassettes that dominated music sales until CDs came along in the early 1990s.

Technology — digital recording technology in particular — turned the music industry on its ear. CDs hit the consumer market in 1982, and by 1995 they were outselling cassettes three to one. In the late 1990s, MP3 technology made it

possible to compress all the digital information on a music CD into a file that's relatively easy to download — with very little loss of sound quality. Then along came Napster and a few others to make it easier for Internet users to share music files online.

It's still too early to know exactly how all this will affect the music industry. But one thing seems certain: The production and consumption of recorded music will never be the same.

Hard Copy

Does anyone still read? Yes, but our tastes and reading habits aren't exactly the same as they were in 1980.

For example, one set of figures seems to indicate that we're not reading the newspaper as much as we used to, but other figures suggest that maybe we're just more inclined to read a newspaper in the morning and look at TV news in the evening.

And, yes, books may be retro, but we're still buying them. Total U.S. book sales topped \$25.3 billion in 2001, and sales of juvenile titles were up nearly 18

What Is Hip?

Manufacturers' Shipments of Recorded Media - United States (in millions)

	1982	1990	2000
Vinyl albums	243.9	11.7	2.2
Cassettes	182.3	442.2	76.0
Music CDs	NA	286.5	942.5

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001*.

percent over the preceding year — either kids are reading more than we think, or adults really like Harry Potter.

But you might want to think twice before quitting your job to open the cozy little bookshop of your dreams. Superstores and online vendors are making it tougher and tougher for small, independent booksellers to survive.

Stop the Presses?

	1980	2000
Total number of U.S. daily newspapers	1,745	1,480
Total circulation	62.2 million	55.8 million
Circulation of evening dailies	32.7 million	9.0 million
Circulation of morning dailies	29.4 million	46.8 million

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2001*.

The Movies: Lights, Camera, (Lots of) Action

How have movies changed since 1980? Three phrases tell you almost everything you need to know: Special effects, multiplex theaters, action films.

The 1980s began with audiences still marveling at the special effects in *E.T.* and *Star Wars*. But compared to what we now see onscreen, *Star Wars* seems long ago and far away. Cinematic special effects and computer-generated animation get more spectacular every year.

Theaters are more technologically advanced, too. A multiplex might not have the charm of a small art house, but it's not a bad place to watch a film. Sound and projection quality are better than ever. And thanks to stadium seating, you don't have to get angry when some hat-wearing oaf sits in front of you. It's almost enough to make you forget how much your ticket cost.

But what about the films themselves? Do audiences really want to see *Revenge of the Die Hard Terminator, Part 7*? The short answer, of course, is "yes." Action films make money — especially in the international market. Fast action and dazzling special effects play well in any language.

The Sporting Life

In some ways, pro sports and television followed a parallel course during the last two decades of the 20th century. When the 1980s began, ABC, CBS, and NBC still dominated television, and the Big Four — basketball, baseball, football, and hockey — still had a lock on most of the pro sports action.

Then along came ESPN, Fox Sports, NASCAR, and the WWE to shake things up. By the end of the 1990s, stock car drivers, pro wrestlers, and extreme athletes were winning the hearts of young fans and capturing a respectable share of the sports/entertainment market.



Shopping: The Other Great American Pastime

When the 1980s began, advertisements for the Yellow Pages still urged shoppers to let their “fingers do the walking.” Twenty years later, shoppers were indeed letting their fingers do the walking, but they were walking across the keyboards of computers that hadn’t even been invented in 1980. We’re now able (and willing) to shop nationwide, or even worldwide, for the right product at the best price. And for the most part, we’re doing it on our own, without a lot of guidance from salespeople.

In fact, whether we’re online or in line, shopping has become much more of a self-service experience. Some of the things we now do for ourselves are fairly simple: Pump our own gas, access our bank accounts via automated teller machines, scan and bag our own groceries at the supermarket. But there are other things that many of us might not have attempted in 1980 without the assistance of a trained professional — things like making our own travel arrangements or buying and selling stocks.

Of course, now that we’re living in a self-service world, we’d all do well to heed an ancient dictum of marketplace: *Caveat emptor* — Let the buyer beware. And that holds true whether we’re trading stocks online or scanning coupons at the supermarket.

Want to Know More?

The TV Basics web site has lots of information on TV advertising and the

Technology Comes to Toyland

They didn’t walk. They didn’t talk. All they did was look cute. But that was enough to make Cabbage Patch Kids the smash hit of the 1983 holiday shopping season. Sales topped three million, and by early December the moon-faced moppets had all but disappeared from store shelves. Desperate parents were hooking up with some pretty unsavory characters, and paying way more than the \$30 retail price, just to get their hands on . . . a vinyl-headed doll!



Fifteen years later, another cuddly little character was the hot-selling holiday sensation. But Furby could do a lot more than look cute. The fist-sized ball of fluff spoke a dialect all its own (Furbish) and had the programmed capability to “learn” English — all for a retail price of \$29.

Games had gone “high-tech,” too. The trend started with *Pong*, a no-frills, black-and-white version of video ping pong that held players in its thrall for countless hours during the 1970s. Then, in the early 1980s, *Pac Man* and *Donkey Kong* worked the arcades, while a collection of companies jockeyed for position in the home entertainment market.



And that was only the beginning. By the late 1990s, a new generation of games and home platforms made *Pong* and *Pac Man* seem like cave paintings.

State of Emergency, which debuted in 2001, would have been almost inconceivable 20 years earlier — in part because the technology didn’t exist, but also because its story line depends on an economic and political context that was barely taking shape when *Pac Man* and *Donkey Kong* ruled the arcades. Here’s how columnist Wagner James Au described the game in an article for the online magazine *Salon*:

State of Emergency is set in the very near future, when the wildest anti-globalization prophecies have come to pass: A giant multinational corporation now dominates the entire country, devastating the environment, dissolving all democratic governance, controlling all media. Dissent is prohibited, and the only glimmer of resistance is from the Freedom Movement, an underground affiliation of young people who take to the streets with their faces masked by bandanas. (February 22, 2002)

The irony, of course, is that *State of Emergency* is a product of globalization. A Scottish company created it for use on a game platform developed by a multinational entertainment conglomerate. (But that’s another story.)

growth of television. <http://www.tvb.org/tvfacts/index.htm>

An extensive online chronology of recording technology history is available at <http://history.acusd.edu/gen/recording/notes.html>.

For more information on the changing economics of pro sports, check out *Peanuts & Crackerjacks*. <http://www.bos.frb.org/peanuts/leadpgs/intro.htm>