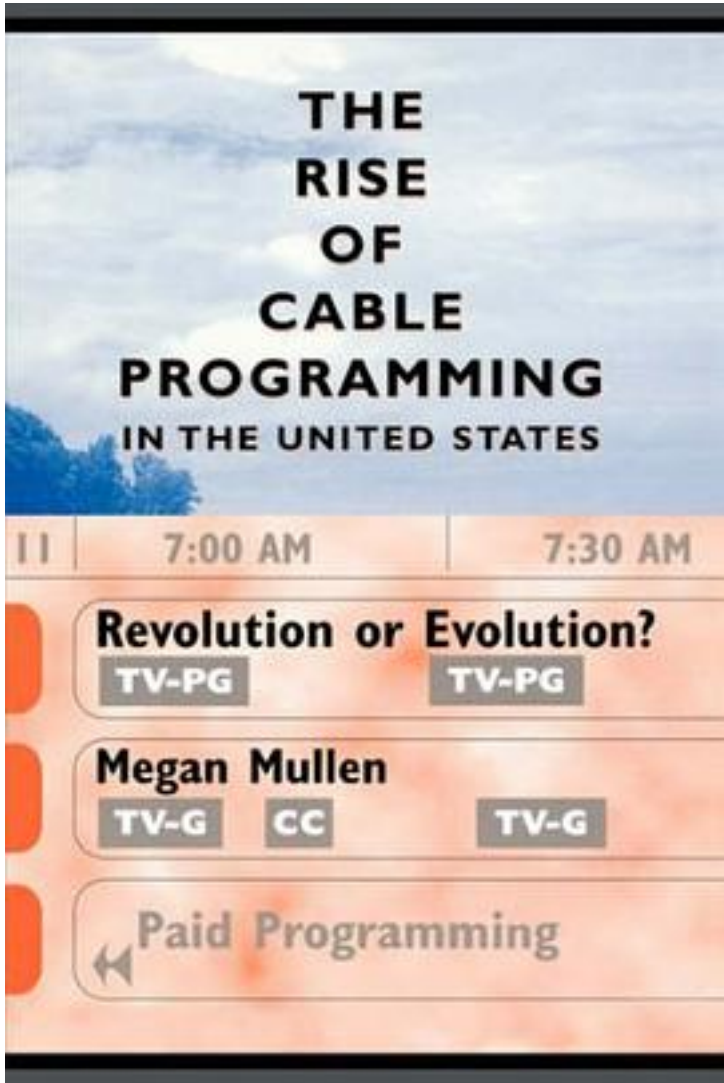


# The Rise of Cable Programming in the United States



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著者:Megan Mullen

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In 1971, the Sloan Commission on Cable Communications likened the ongoing developments in cable television to the first uses of movable type and the invention of the telephone. Cable's proponents in the late 1960s and early 1970s hoped it would eventually remedy all the perceived ills of broadcast television, including lowest-common-denominator programming, inability to serve the needs of local audiences, and failure to recognize the needs of cultural minorities. Yet a quarter century after the "blue sky" era, cable television programming closely resembled, and indeed depended upon, broadcast television programming. Whatever happened to the Sloan Commission's "revolution now in sight"? In this book, Megan Mullen examines the first half-century of cable television to understand why cable never achieved its promise as a radically different means of communication. Using textual analysis and oral, archival, and regulatory history, she chronicles and analyzes cable programming developments in the United States during three critical stages of the medium's history: the early community antenna (CATV) years (1948-1967), the optimistic "blue sky" years (1968-1975), and the early satellite years (1976-1995). This history clearly reveals how cable's roots as a retransmitter of broadcast signals, the regulatory constraints that stymied innovation, and the economic success of cable as an outlet for broadcast or broadcast-type programs all combined to defeat most utopian visions for cable programming.

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