With each edition of this text, we have marveled at how much new research there is on the subject of persuasion. In the last edition, we highlighted the ascent of new and emerging media such as the blogosphere, Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, and YouTube. We underscored their role in viral marketing or word-of-mouth influence. Since the last edition, social media have kept the world abreast of developments in the Arab Spring movement. YouTube has become more than a collection of cat videos. It now functions as an important source for video journalism, bringing eyewitness accounts and raw footage of events from around the world. Digital activism now allows people to affiliate with causes online. Hashtag activism allows people to promote causes in 140 characters or less. The blogosphere functions as the online equivalent of tabloids, often dictating trending topics, and occasionally getting the story right. Websites such as Cause.com and DoSomething.org allow ordinary people to launch causes and promote change. The transformational role of social media as a form of influence is updated in the pages that follow. Social media, however are not the whole story. There are grass roots movements, such as the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, that rely on “old-fashioned” strategies, such as sit-ins, protest marches, and civil disobedience. Moreover, traditional persuasion in the form of advertising, marketing, and political campaigning continues to thrive. Mainstream persuaders have stepped up their game by embracing strategies such as authenticity or genuineness in their branding or cause-related marketing to show they really care. They have begun to rely on sentiment tracking to follow consumers, voters, and others on social media in nearly real time. The TED conference, or Ted Talks, merges “old-school” presentations with new technology, offering a venue for sharing and promoting big ideas through lectures, demonstrations, and art performances.

As always, we view persuasion not only as an altogether intriguing and mostly desirable form of activity but also as an indispensable feature of human interaction. We hope you will catch our enthusiasm for this field of study and come away with a better understanding of how persuasion functions, an improved knowledge of ways to maximize your own persuasive efforts, and a greater ability to resist influence attempts, especially unscrupulous influence attempts, by others.