Questions to ask:

Who uses T?

How is T used? (purpose, setting, implementation, etc.)

What practices & institutions surround the use of T? (e.g., archives, bureaucracies & laws, commercial interests, etc.)

What other technologies does the use of T require?

What are the alternatives to T?

What is the social significance of T?
Technologies in Context

Social significance (e.g. trust, authority)

Technology (e.g., writing)

Implementation (e.g. parchment documents w/seals)

Setting (e.g. legal transactions)

Alternatives (e.g. oral exchange of livery)

Institutions (e.g. archives, courts)

Users (e.g. clerks, monks)
The Interdependence of Technologies

Technological grounding of the national newspaper

- Times Printing Press -- 1814
- Stephenson's Rocket, 1827
- Trevethink, 1803
- Strap-iron rails
- Foudrinier Machine, 1811
- Nicolas Robert, Paper Machine, 1798
Social Prerequisites for Technologies, 1

Economic factors

- Capital formations, apparatus of credit, etc. (cf growth of book trade)
- Channels of trade & distribution
- Specialization of printing trades
Growth in literacy

Protestant > Catholic

Literacy rates highest in Sweden, New England, Wales…
  But relatively high literacy rate in Catholic areas of Northern Europe (Bavaria, Rhineland)

Urban > rural
Men > women
Growth in literacy

As literacy grows, institutions arise to mediate between written culture and nonliterate
"Information Technologies": Nexis of technical & social
By the mid-18th century, printing is common in private, commercial, and bureaucratic life: used for posters, theater bills, handbills, tickets, receipts, marriage certificates, "printed forms meant to be filled in by hand." … And money.
Print and Public Discourse

Print and the creation of "public space." The role of epigraphic writing.
Aside: The Epigraphic and the Bibliographic:
Ubiquity of Roman Epigraphy
The Renaissance Book

Epigraph from the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, Venice, 1499

Piranesi frontispiece, 1764
The Book in Baroque Epigraphy

Bernini, Tomb of Urban VIII, 1628
Epigraphy in modern life
Epigraphy in modern life: Aesthetic...

Jenny Holzer

Joseph Kosuth
End of c. 17 (Britain): emergence of new social domain independent of state and private life: new role for "public opinion" to replace and complement authority of state. "Mediates between society and the state" (Habermas)

Association with new social contexts, new forms of writing
public, n.

Am. Her: The community or the people as a whole. 2. A group of people sharing a common interest: *the reading public*.

OED: The community as an aggregate, but not in its organized capacity
public, n. 1.  
Am. Her: The community or the people as a whole. 2. A group of people sharing a common interest: the reading public.

OED: The community as an aggregate, but not in its organized capacity

Occurrences in major newspapers, 2005:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American people</td>
<td>2660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American public</td>
<td>1350 (1:2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi people</td>
<td>940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraqi public</td>
<td>37 (1:25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

cf. ?The medieval British public.
Defining "the public"

public, n. 1.
Am. Her: The community or the people as a whole. 2. A group of people sharing a common interest: *the reading public.*

OED: The community as an aggregate, but not in its organized capacity

Occurrences in major newspapers, 2005:

- *American people*: 2660
- *American public*: 1350 (1:2)
- *Iraqi people*: 940
- *Iraqi public*: 37 (1:25)

*cf. The medieval British public.*

“The press created the public”: G. Tarde
"It is certainly right and prudent to consult the public opinion. ... If the public opinion did not happen to square with mine; if, after pointing out to them the danger, they did not see it in the same light with me, or if they conceived that another remedy was preferable to mine, I should consider it as my due to my king, due to my Country, due to my honour to retire ... but one thing is clear, that I ought to give the public the means of forming an opinion."
Charles James Fox, 1792
Modern notions of intellectual property, publishing, authorship, etc.

Cf Oliver Goldsmith, 1761: "that fatal revolution whereby writing is converted to a mechanic trade; and booksellers, instead of the great, become the patrons and paymasters of men of genius."
Creating the public: The Book as an "Inscription in Space"

The newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life…creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations. --Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[Britain] has become a nation of readers. --Samuel Johnson, 1781
The Book as a Public Presence
Two Spatial Models of Electronic Discourse -- Piazzas or Souks?
The Virtual Rialto