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Time for Journalism

Technology, Industry, Management, Education

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EDITORIAL

1997 was an interesting and stressful year in higher education, so far 1998 has been much of the same. We're left wondering, 'Is there time for journalism?'. Yes, as it turns out. Not too far past deadline the Proceedings are ready, we're nearly through another busy semester and so far, we're still sane.

Our goal was to make sure everyone who attended JEA '97 had a good time and took something 'educational' away from the experience. From the feedback it seems most delegates went away happy.

On a more serious level Time for Journalism was about developing our individual and collective experience of an 'academic' culture in journalism education. It was pleasing to see how well the presentations lived up to our hopes. Discussion was lively and the papers reflective of the commitment we all have to 'doing it better'.

This is a timely collection in light of recent very public discussion of journalism education in The Australian's Higher Education Supplement (18 and 25 March 1998). While none refer to it directly (they were written before it appeared) a number of contributions show that we are already deeply engaged in this debate. Here we also address implicitly the so-called 'vocational'/'intellectual' split with a good mix of papers. Some are taken from recently completed or ongoing postgraduate research. Several involve collaboration between the 'teachers' and the 'doers'. Journalism education is not a 'vacant' lot, it's a busy construction zone. Pass 'round the hard hats.

The conference attracted papers from educators, editors and working journalists across all the strands, Technology, Industry, Management and Education. Those submitted for this publication were, in many cases, substantially revised by the author; the conference itself acting as a peer review process.

It is with sadness that we celebrate the life of Dr Charles Stuart who tragically died soon after attending our December 1997 conference. For many of us it will remain our lasting impression of Charles, resplendent in red braces, his feet up on a chair, deeply engaged in thinking and arguing about journalism and journalism education. With Monica Stuart's permission we have reprinted the JEA's online tribute to Charles in The Proceedings and dedication this publication to his memory.

Martin Hirst and Janice Withnall
Editors and Co-convenors JEA '97
16 April 1998
Media Ownership: Old Themes, New Challenges

Jock Given

This article discusses the Coalition Government's abortive attempt to reform Australia's media ownership laws in 1996 and 1997 and some emerging issues which test traditional models of ownership and control regulation.

The Government's Review

In its pre-election policy statement Better Communications, the Coalition undertook to review Australia's media ownership laws. It said:

The Coalition is committed to implementing a coherent approach to media ownership and cross-media regulation which is driven by national interest and not party political considerations...A Coalition Government will conduct a comprehensive public review of the existing cross media regime to determine the most cost effective means of achieving such central public interest objectives as plurality, diversity and competition in order to ensure a free, vigorous and independent media sector in Australia (Liberal National Coalition, 1996).

The Coalition promised a greater degree of accountability in making decisions about media ownership. Reasons would be given for ownership decisions, and 'wherever possible, relevant decision-making processes will be conducted in the public arena'. It would maintain its 'long-standing policy commitment to examine media related foreign investment on a case by case basis' and would 'require the Treasurer to publish reasons for decisions relating to foreign investment in the media sector'.

So far, so good.

An Issues Paper was released by the Department of Communications and the Arts in October 1996 (Department of Communications and the Arts 1996). It confirmed plurality, diversity and competition as 'the central public interest objectives of the Government's policy' and digital technology, convergence and globalisation as factors which 'are arguably already having a significant effect on the plurality, diversity and competitiveness of the media in Australia'. It said 'The more significant of these trends are the emergence of a multichannel environment in both radio and television and, with it, the empowerment of the consumer'. The paper raised questions rather than proposing answers, and invited public submissions.

The Issues Paper attracted a number of submissions (see http://www.dca.gov.au/review/subs/mediasub.html) which in turn received considerable coverage in the media. Submissions from the major media organisations, not surprisingly, endorsed options which would enhance the commercial interests of the respective organisations and opposed those which would be prejudicial to their interests.

News Limited proposed the abolition of foreign ownership and cross-ownership rules specific to the media sector, and their replacement by more flexible regulation under the Trade Practices Act and the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act. PBL, controllers of the Nine Network and aspirants to control of the Fairfax newspaper empire, agreed that the cross-media rules which prevent the company getting control of Fairfax should go, but it supported the retention of foreign ownership rules, which would limit the field of potential purchasers of Fairfax. Fairfax, whose largest shareholder at the time was a foreigner, Conrad Black's Hollinger, agreed that the media-specific foreign ownership rules should be removed. However, it was sceptical about the impact to date of new media. It supported the replacement over time of the cross-media rules with more flexible 'technology neutral' regulation, and the immediate exclusion of radio from their coverage (Grant 1996).

Despite the government's election commitment to reform Australia's media ownership laws, it found itself unable to come up with a specific set of options which would deliver on the stated policy objectives and satisfy the conflicting demands of rival media owners. In the end, it seemed just about everyone was off-side - the media owners, the Government's backbench, the Senate and key journalists. The Government announced, in September 1997, not in a media release, but by Ministerial staff reading a statement to anyone who rang and asked, that the issue had been put 'on the backburner' to allow the Government to focus on issues 'of more interest to mainstream Australia'.

But the issue won't go away.

There has been the continuing saga of Channel Ten, found to be in breach of the foreign ownership rules by the Australian Broadcasting Authority and the Treasurer in April 1997 (Australian Broadcasting Authority 1997a), and battling in the courts for extra time to get its house in order ever since. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission blocked the proposed merger of pay TV rivals Foxtel and Australis late in 1997 (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission 1997), on the basis mainly that it would substantially reduce Optus' capacity to provide competition in the local telephony market. Kerry Packer offloaded PBL's 15% stake in Fairfax, the maximum permitted under the cross-media rules, into a trust, ostensibly to sell down the holding in a way that 'maximised the value of the asset'. Some thought it was merely a device to allow Packer to argue that he no longer controlled the shares and the Trust could therefore acquire more of Fairfax. The ABA hinted that this scenario was unlikely to find favour (Australian Broadcasting Authority 1997b). Finally, the government has been grappling with the possible introduction of digital TV and radio, whose technical capacities are argued by some to challenge ideas which are...
Principles of Regulation and Rationales for Reform

When the government last sat down to have a hard look at media ownership and control rules in 1986, it found a number of rationales for specific restrictions in this sector over and above those applying to all industries. These were:

- to prevent undue concentration of ownership or control;
- to encourage local and independent ownership;
- to limit foreign ownership and prevent foreign control;
- to preserve the integrity of licensing decisions; and
- to maintain diverse shareholdings (Department of Communications 1986).

Several of these rationales appear to be redundant or irrelevant to the policy framework implemented in the legislation and practice which now governs media ownership and control.

Preserving the integrity of licensing decisions is largely irrelevant in an environment where, since the passage of the Broadcasting Services Act in 1992, only community broadcasting licences are allocated through 'merit-based' selection processes. All other categories of licence, including commercial TV and radio and pay TV licences, are now allocated by 'price-based' methods (auctions). There is no justification for maintaining the integrity of a decision which only amounted to an acknowledgment of who was offering to pay the most money once the money is paid.

The desirability of diverse shareholdings in media enterprises is no longer articulated in the policy framework. Indeed, the government’s decision to increase from 20-25% the maximum individual shareholding by a foreign person in a mass circulation newspaper was intended precisely to safeguard Conrad Black’s control (Chadwick 1992). Some would now argue that a diversity of shareholdings is a recipe for strategic confusion. Certainly those who battled through the complexities of Optus Vision, when it counted as shareholders the Seven and Nine networks, might agree. Optus Vision was competing head-on with Telstra and News’ pay TV joint venture Foxtel, especially in the bitter Super League brawl. News Limited, a 15% shareholder in the Seven network at the time, was less than impressed when Seven decided to sell its pay TV rights to AFL football to News’ pay TV rival Optus Vision. On the other hand, the government seems likely to be happy to see a widely-spread share register for a fully privatised Telstra.

The desirability of local and independent ownership of media enterprises clearly disappeared from the policy framework with the elimination of most of the multiple interest rules in 1987 and 1992, which allowed rationalisation of ownership of commercial TV and radio on a grand scale (see especially Collingwood 1997, for a discussion of the impact in commercial radio), although the ‘equalisation’ of regional commercial television services (expanding from one to three the number of commercial TV stations available in the major regional markets in the eastern mainland states) was expressed as a policy which would maintain a distinctive identity for country television (Minister for Transport and Communications 1987).

All that appears to be left of the range of traditional policy rationales is the need to prevent undue concentration of ownership and control and to limit foreign ownership and prevent foreign control.

Yet even these principles were under attack in the debate which surrounded the government’s review.

News Limited argued that control of Australia’s media was not currently particularly concentrated, adapting the ‘share of voice’ model developed in the UK on the basis of time spent using major media, to show that the ABC was Australia’s most influential media organisation. It was followed by Austereo, the Seven Network, PBL (controller of the Nine Network and almost half the country’s magazine circulation), the Ten Network and the Australian Radio Network. News Limited was the seventh most influential organisation, a ranking which largely reflected the fact that people spend relatively little time reading the products in the markets News dominates most comprehensively (daily and suburban newspapers) by comparison with the time they spend watching TV and listening to the radio.

News also argued that the abundance of new media (its ‘prodigious new opportunities’) and the convergence of traditionally distinct sectors (‘the rapid blurring of the boundaries’) rendered ‘[c]urrent regulations governing media ownership...anachronistic’. New media were diminishing the influence of old media and further distancing the producers of content (journalists, program-makers and others) from the personal tastes of ‘owners’ who were more concerned with whether audiences wanted what content producers made rather than with whether it was consistent with their own personal tastes or affiliations. Less rules would lead to a more competitive media environment and audiences and consumers would be the winners.

PBL agreed on this point:

‘The notion of spectrum scarcity is no longer relevant, as barriers to entry to media outlets are no longer prohibitive, and it has become relatively easy to disseminate news and information...The assumption that common ownership of different media sectors equates with common views being expressed across different sectors is anachronistic, paranoiac and simply, wrong...As diversity is assured no matter who owns what outlet, and competition law ensures competitiveness, the need for cross media rules has vanished.’
But it offered a stout defence of the foreign ownership rules:

'The policy priority which most accords with economic and broadcasting objectives is promotion of forceful Australian companies which can compete against foreign conglomerates and proudly represent Australia in the international arena...This policy recognises...that strong Australian media companies will have a primary loyalty to Australia in business and content decision making, that their style will be Australian, and that Australian culture and values will be reflected in the services provided by the company...'

It saw a relationship between liberalised rules at home, alongside the retention of rules restricting foreign participation in Australia's media:

'Currently Australian media companies are forced to stay small and non-competitive because artificial cross media restraints (based narrowly on ownership thresholds and interlocking directorships) have prevented them from taking advantage of scale. They cannot compete with foreign conglomerates who have derived scale advantages in their home markets and may have the benefits of vertical integration...The harmonisation of the broadcasting objective of diversity, and national economic and cultural imperatives will elevate the Australian voice in the global media arena.

The PBL position came from a Kerry Packer somewhat removed from the one who, a few years earlier, had joined with Canadian Conrad Black to bid for the Fairfax empire in the wake of Warwick Fairfax's failed takeover.

**New Media - Gates of Influence**

The primary focus of the government's review was the reform of traditional rules about the ownership of the outlets which distribute media content to audiences and consumers, particularly licences to offer television and radio services.

These have never been the only media assets whose control offers the capacity for 'influence', and which have thus been targets for special rules about ownership and control. Newspapers were brought into the coverage of media-specific rules with the passage of the cross-media rules in 1987. Telecommunications infrastructure was brought within the coverage of such rules in a small way in 1992 with the passage of the Broadcasting Services Act, which prevented people in a position to exercise control of a telecommunications carrier licences from holding more than a small stake in one of the three satellite pay TV licences (section 108 - this section ceased to have effect on 1 July 1997).

Control of rights to broadcast the most valuable television programs has become another crucial area of influence. These particularly include movies and major live sport. The trend for major content producers, such as Hollywood studios, to be part of larger, vertically integrated organisations with both production and distribution interests (eg. Twentieth Century Fox, as part of News Corporation; Warner Brothers as part of Time Warner; the ABC network as part of Disney; the Seven Network as a part-owner of MGM) has been established for some time.

Increasingly, media organisations are attempting to acquire a deeper relationship with the organisations which run the major sports and thus control broadcast rights to them. They acquire not just broadcast rights, but whole events, the clubs and individuals who play in them, and the venues where they are played.

World Series Cricket and more recently Super League are examples of media organisations actually running their own competitions, effectively employing the players and changing the very rules of the game to maximise 'television-friendliness'. In the US, Murdoch is attempting to acquire the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team, following the example of New York's television sports king Charles Dolan, who now has 'a virtual monopoly over the televised broadcasts of seven of the nine major New York professional sports teams' - his company owns the mens (Knicks) and womens basketball teams, the hockey team (Rangers), Madison Square Garden, where they all play, and local cable rights to the games played by other teams such as baseball's Yankees and Mets (Bruck 1997: 87-8).

In Australia, Kerry Stokes' Seven Network agreed to move its network headquarters to the redeveloped Docklands site in Melbourne and participate in the building of a new stadium which will be used by the Australian Football League (AFL), as part of a deal to secure rights to broadcast the AFL, the single most valuable sports programming asset in Australian television, alongside the Olympics (The Australian Financial Review 1997). Seven will be joined at the site by a theme park and studio complex to be developed by another Hollywood studio, Viacom's Paramount, after the Victorian Premier had attempted to lure Murdoch's Fox Studios, which went instead to Sydney's Showgrounds site (Woods 1997). The new National Rugby League, formed by the amalgamation of Super League and the pre-existing Australian Rugby League, is headquartered at Murdoch's Fox Studios in Sydney.

New media technologies are offering considerable opportunities for concentration of control of the media's output. This is a paradox. As capacity shortages in telecommunications and broadcasting are decreased by the introduction of new delivery technologies (cable, satellite, digital terrestrial transmission), the simultaneous introduction of conditional access technologies increases the potential for suppliers 'to create and exploit dominant market positions or positions of bottleneck control' (OFTEL 1998).

Bill Gates' Microsoft, a genuine new player in world communications over the last two decades, has rapidly acquired a position of staggering dominance in key parts of the emerging communications market place. Central to his strategy has been the control of computer operating systems, and the leveraging of power from this segment of
the market into other previously distinct markets for software. 'Microsoft’s monopolistic hold on the industry means, for the most part, people interact with it not because they want to, but because they have to,' says Ana Marie Cox in a Mother Jones Special Investigation of the company (Mother Jones 1998). Regulators are struggling to keep up - with information about what is happening and with laws about competitive behaviour developed in simpler times (see The Economist 1997).

Old media appear to be succeeding in leveraging power from existing assets - Telstra’s local loop, Optus’ imperial father Cable & Wireless, the Web’s dominance by the sites of major established media organisations - in Australia, the ABC, Fairfax, NineMSN.

Basic information - movie session times, weather forecasts, public transport timetables - is looming as an important element of on-line services which are being established. Those who control rights to such information may have significant power in the emerging media landscape. ABC TV’s Four Corners reported last year (ABC TV 1997) that major cinema exhibitors had refused to supply session times to a proposed service which wanted to offer a comprehensive on-line source of information on all cinema session times. The major exhibitors preferred to establish their own site, which did not incorporate information from ‘independent’ cinemas.

Not all the powerful people in the media actually own media enterprises. Hollywood has long recognised the commercial value of its stars. The studios have largely lost the kind of exclusive control over actors and actresses which they had in the golden age of the ‘studio system’, although the audiovisual conglomerates have had more success in signing major musical acts to deals which encompass an individual’s entire creative output (Michael Jackson, Madonna). These days, the individuals themselves, and especially their agents, wield enormous power - from John Laws to Jerry Seinfeld, the talk-back radio hosts, the media ‘commentators’, the network news anchor-people and others have substantial power through the monopoly control they have over their own services.

If the traditional policy concerns about concentration of control of sources of information, entertainment and ideas persist, the policy techniques for doing something about them are going to need to be increasingly agile.

**Media Ownership and Journalism**

The question of who owns or controls our media presents particular challenges to journalism.

The owners of the media are the people who pay journalists’ wages. They, or their senior editors or managers, decide whether particular journalists have careers or not, and if they do, what quality of work they get the chance to spend their lives doing - the promotions, the pay rises, the specialist rounds, the overseas postings, the big interviews, the by-lined columns, the award nominations.

The owners of the media are also the people who are courted by the law-makers to take their messages to the people who elect them. The law-makers in turn are courted by media owners to make laws which best suit their commercial interests. It is a cosy gathering at which professional journalism is sometimes a most unwelcome visitor.

The emerging issues in media and communications ownership and control discussed above demand increasingly complex analysis, not only by regulators and policy-makers but by the journalists who report on their investigations and decisions. There will often be ‘clash-of-the-titans’, ‘Packer v Murdoch’ elements in Australia’s debates about media and communications policy, but these headline-grabbing components are usually only the thin surface of much more difficult issues which cry out for careful analysis. Battle stories from the war zone will often be easy to find, but ultimately will be less valuable than hard information and tough thinking, to a public struggling to keep up with the complexity of the technologies and the shifting of markets.

ustralians depend on their journalists to report what is happening and how it might affect the public accurately, fairly and perceptively. The media and communications business which employs them is becoming even more central to the workings of an ‘information society’. That makes the responsibility of journalism more intense at precisely the moment when its practice is most challenged.

*Thanks to Therese Iverach at the Communications Law Centre for research assistance.*

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Jock Given is the Director of the Communications Law Centre, a public interest research, teaching and public education organisation specialising in media and communications law and policy. The Centre was established in 1988 and is affiliated with the University of NSW and Victoria University of Technology. He has previously worked with the Australian Film Commission in Sydney, the Federal Departments of Finance and Transport and Communications in Canberra and the Commonwealth Games Foundation in Brisbane.
Broadcasting in the Twenty First Century

Professor David Flint

May I begin by speaking on the fundamental question whether predictions about the future are of much use. I was informed years ago that the BETA video recorder was technically superior to the VHS. I think this is true, but I have forgotten why. But the VHS recorder was able to conquer the market. I have to confess that I not only bought one, but later another BETA machine.

So you see, I am hardly qualified to make predictions about broadcasting technology in the twenty first century.

But who is?

If we cast minds back 100 years, who could have made accurate predictions about this century?

Certainly it was reasonable 100 years ago to assume that France and Germany would fight another war. And that Britain, whose industry and whose empire was being challenged, could be dragged in.

And it would have been reasonable to assume that democratic government would have continued to spread over the world. Who would have thought in much of the 20th century vast populations would live under dictatorial governments.

And who would have thought that Marconi’s then recent invention, radio, would have been more than a method of communication. That out of it and Baird’s invention, television, the concept of broadcasting would be born.

We have people today telling us that something’s are “inevitable”. Just as Kruschev said “History is on our side. We will bury you”. But only taxes and death are inevitable. As Lord Keynes observed.

“The inevitable never happens. What happens is the unforeseen.”

You need only go back half a century to see how different the world was. My constitutional law students are no doubt intrigued by two leading High Court cases of that time. In one the Liberal government unsuccessfully attempted to outlaw the Communist Party. And this by a party which expressed a strong belief in individual freedom. In another, the Labor Party unsuccessfully attempted to nationalise all banking. This by the party which three decades later would deregulate the financial system, let in foreign banks, and privatise the Commonwealth Bank.

Am I saying to you that I know nothing about the subject of my talk? Well if I am, I am quite used to that. The sole consideration for appointment as Chairman of the Australian Press Council was to have no previous connection with the press! In other words to know nothing about the job.

Before I get to the subject I thought you might find some past warnings and predictions about the media to be interesting.

Lord Newton in 1925 deploring the effect of film on young people asked Parliament to “imagine what the effect must be on millions of our coloured fellow citizens in remote parts of the world who perpetually have American films thrust on them....”

His Lordship’s reasons soon became apparent. These American films, he said “frequently present the white man under the most unfavourable conditions and in addition are often of an extremely mischievous character”!

A Mr Montague in 1926 informed Parliament about radio in these words “There are quite a lot of people who because they have limited brains call everything they do not and never will understand high brow.... The suggestion I make is that we might recognise the demand for low brow entertainment, jazz orchestras and the rest of it”!

A Mrs Mann 1947 warned the House, “We (MPs) are perturbed at the rising costs in the divorce courts”, (and she added illegitimacy and the fostering of rejected children”). The reason she suggested was the BBC, its entertainment programmes - “Their band shows and crooners” encouraged people to regard “that sort of thing as the height of happiness”!

Lord Noel Burton, in 1956 predicted this about TV “A nation fed on this pap for one generation might as well scrap its education system and spend the money on asylums”!

Well. So much for predictions and warnings.

Let me now get down to the subject. I should first like to look at the legal and constitutional context of broadcasting - at least broadcasting regulation. I will say something then about the subject of regulation competition and diversity (including Australian control of the commanding heights of broadcasting), the protection of Australian culture, and finally compliance with ethical and community standards.

The Legal and Constitutional Context of Broadcasting

Let me say firstly that I expect that broadcasting in Australia will continue to operate with a high degree of freedom.

This follows from our political philosophy which has been the hallmark of the English speaking countries. These countries gave the modern world workable democratic government. And they had learned the great lesson of government - that there was only one way to prevent abuse of power even in a democracy. No matter how good the candidate looks, assume that he may abuse power. Therefore put in place checks and balances on political
power. And one of the greatest checks and balances on power is the free media. Its role was best explained by Justice Black in the Pentagon Papers case where he said,

"In the First Amendment the founding fathers gave the press the protection it must have to fulfill its essential role in our democracy. The press was to serve the governed, not the governors. The Government's power to censor the press was abolished so that the press would remain forever free to censure the Government. The press was protected so that could bare the secrets of government and inform the people. Only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government." (403 US 713; 717)

That the print media must remain free from any regulation apart from the general law is accepted almost universally, except by Stuart Littlemore QC. And what of the broadcast media? According to the Supreme Court of the United States, the only justification for regulation there is spectrum scarcity. In other words, the spectrum is finite - there is room for only so many broadcast stations to operate without interfering with each other. The licensees then are seen as trustees of a public good, with obligations which result from their status.

Of course neither the print media and the electronic media are exempt from the general laws of the nation, including those which put reasonable limitations on free speech. But every so often, a well intentioned proposal will be put forward which for some good reason will put a burden on free speech and the freedom of the media.

Let me give you an example.

We have in NSW a bill to charge the media with the costs of aborted trials where the media is guilty of a contempt of court. While I would not condone any interference in the right of the accused to a fair trial, it is well known that the law of contempt can be breached inadvertently. Possibly even by a Minister of the Crown. Or even by a court. The potential for enormous costs being imposed on the media, especially small newspapers and radio stations, could drive some out of business. That the approval of the Attorney General is necessary for any such action is comforting. Today Mr Jeffrey Shaw QC is a man in whom one may have the fullest confidence. But we do not know who will be in charge tomorrow.

Or in the years ahead. Other policies may be needed, for example, the practice of aborting trials needs closer examination.

And we need to have more confidence in the good sense and good faith of our jurors. When properly directed, they are quite capable of putting aside all irrelevant information. Just as capable as lawyers are. A law which would penalise the media, and only the media is not reasonably necessary in a democratic society.

May I say some general words on broadcasting. When radio was introduced, the British initially put it under the control of that great independent broadcaster, the BBC. The Americans, as far as the spectrum would allow, left it to the market. Such is the genius of our country, we took the best of both worlds. More recently we added community broadcasting. The result is we have one of the widest ranges of programming in the world (I speak of width, not quantity). We have been so successful that the Australian model for radio and television has been adopted in many older countries. Unfortunately, the Australian source is not acknowledged.

But while we did well conceptually, the actual practice of broadcasting regulation was, by the early 1990's, seriously degraded. The much amended Broadcasting Act, 1942 had proved to be excessively legalistic. It was an incentive for unnecessary litigation. In addition, rather than allowing Australians to benefit from new technology, the system as a whole acted as an unnecessary delay mechanism. As obvious examples we need only recall the relatively late arrival of free-to-air television itself, or pay television. The system was not working well.

Yet Australians have shown themselves to be among the most advanced people on this earth in accepting and using new technology - at least where government regulation has not been a barrier, Australians have seized the opportunities made available through the introduction of the video recorder, personal computers, mobile telephones and the internet.

So by 1991 it was agreed that a new approach was needed.

The then government proposed a regulatory framework which would move away from the old prescriptive approach. It would allow the broadcasting industry to respond to the complexities of the modern market place as well as the opportunities created by technological developments.

The underpinning feature of the legislative framework was its 'light touch' and 'co-regulatory' approach to regulation.

The objects of the Broadcasting Services Act have to be read in the broad context of a free society, in which the media must play a central role. The broadcast media exists, as the Act states, to entertain, to educate and to inform. The greatest of these is to inform. For what is the freedom of the press (including the electronic media) if it does not exist so that the people may be informed?

The freedom of the media has now received, as you know, a degree of constitutional protection. The High Court, has this year ruled unanimously that a freedom of political communication arises by implication from the Federal Constitution. But it is no longer a right. It is a restraint on legislative power. The media does not enjoy the special protection it has in the U.S. Would the Australian people agree to a referendum to change our constitution to give such a protection. The question has been put to them, and rejected. But that was part of a package which involved additional powers to Canberra.

And what of regulation in the next century?
The fact is that the subject of broadcasting regulation is slipping away.

First, broadcasts can come from outside. We have always had this with shortwave. But satellite TV will increase by a vast degree the numbers of transmission available. I do not expect any Australian government to do what authoritarian governments try to do, often unsuccessfully - ban satellite dishes.

Second, the traditional and neat boundaries between telecommunications broadcasting, computing and soon print are collapsing as sound, video, computer data and print can be delivered in more than one way, including down a telephone line.

That is not to say there will never be a need for regulation. The broadcast spectrum, even digitalised, will still be finite, and there are other aspects of regulation which the Parliament may wish to continue to promote - competition, the protection of Australian culture and children, and compliance with ethical codes and community standards.

So I come to each of the three principal objectives of regulation.

A Competitive and Diverse Industry

I very much expect that this objective will still continue in our general anti trust law. The convergence of media, and methods of delivery will either sooner or later result in some review of the cross media rules.

International pressures to improve the free flow of capital may equally encourage the Parliament to review the requirement that the commanding heights of broadcasting remain under Australian control.

Both of these matters are ones for Parliament. And I stress that of course a statutory authority must apply the law as it finds it.

I do hope that in the next century we ensure regulation does not impedes the use of new technologies.

Previous attempts to regulate pay television are an example of the dangers of the state attempting to pick winners, and then not encouraging sensible solutions. But I am not saying we should abdicate from regulating the market. When a technology has been chosen by the market, some regulation may be necessary. This is especially so when the market lends itself to being a natural monopoly. With the benefit of hindsight, it would have been better to have granted area franchises for cable, with of course suitable access rights. After all, the state government could encourage competition among light rail companies by allowing each of them to have its own set of tracks running down George Street. But I don't think that would be a sensible solution. I am sure that the public would not want that.

We are now moving towards digital television. The ABA has made its recommendations to the government. But I see Mr Terry McCrann in the Weekend Australian 22-23/11/97 is critical of the ABA report. He warns the "politician/bureaucrats" are trying to set the model for the new industry.

Some 4 ' years after former Keating government minister David "Stan Laurel" Beddall "launched" pay TV in Australia with such enthusiastic stupidity, at least $3 billion of spanking new and hardly used cable, later we are still trying to sort out the mess. And now a different government, a different minister, but the usual bureaucratic suspects -with the public-spirited assistance of private sector interested parties - is gearing up to "do" a new one: digital TV.

Surely it's not asking too much, that the pay TV - for want of a better word - saga would at least give them some pause. That they would approach the issue with some humility: a caution against mandatorily "locking" the new industry in regulatory aspic.

Whatever one thinks of Mr McCrann's views - and he offers no alternatives - I agree with him on one point. A little humility is always a good thing for us regulators.

Promotion of Australian Culture

It is most important now, and will be at least equally important in the 21st century that any nation's culture be promoted. The government's response to the Gonski Report, announced by Senator Alston on 15/11/97 which will provide for valuable assistance to the film industry is an example of the bipartisan policy in that area.

But, that policy is under attack particularly from the United States. This criticism is based on economic arguments. Briefly it is said that cultural industries are industries little different from any others. As Dr Patricia Edgar observes "if it were only economics at stake, it would make sense for all English-speaking film and television to be manufactured in Los Angeles...."

The view that the liberalisation of international trade must also apply to our cultural industries may one day prevail forums in the 21st century.

But even in that event, there exist very sound economic arguments for maintaining the protection of Australian made programmes for television. I suspect those arguments will be sustainable for many years.

If we apply the rules which apply to the export of goods, recent Canadian research indicates that the great American producers are dumping television exports. Exporting TV programmes at less than a fair price. Certainly they sell below cost, which is US$1.2 million per hour. (The Caribbean island of Aruba pays US$80-$100 for US exports!) It is said that the cost of programming is not the correct reference. Well, the alternative seems to be to compare the domestic price with the price importers pay. The US TV networks pay US$800,000 per hour. The highest price paid by any importer is about one eighth of this!
There is no doubt as to the dominance of the US in the export of television programmes. She has 75 per cent of the market. Foreign markets make up one half of all sales by US producers. And entertainment is a significant export industry for the United States, second only to aerospace.

Of course I am not saying we should stop importing US programmes.

But when Australia and other countries are faced with such extraordinary market dominance by the Americans, they will be fully justified on both cultural and economic grounds in providing assistance and other forms of promotion to their own cultural industries. Just as those US companies damaged by monopolisation and other anti trust breaches may seek appropriate redress under US domestic law.

So in future international trade forums, now and in the next century, Australia and other countries should not be embarrassed to defend assistance to local industries.

**Respect for Community Standards**

The system of co-regulation is working well. This involves the development by the industry of codes which need to be approved by the ABA. Complaints from the public are first addressed to the broadcaster, with a reserve jurisdiction vested in the ABA.

But the present Authority is interested in the degree to which “on air” amends are made for material found to be harmfully inaccurate.

At the same time, I find it commendable that the broadcasting industry allows so much public access to the airwaves. As does the press. The much aligned radio talk back programmes provide a valuable service. But television is not yet a medium which so easily lands itself to such access. Yet the ABC and SBS have experimented with programmes which do this. The final few minutes of the Channel 9 programme 60 Minutes allows contrary and supporting views to come through - an excellent way of allowing public access. Although, Mediawatch frequently attacks 60 Minutes, and lambasts Mr Alan Jones and Mr John Laws. These programmes give generous opportunities for other people’s views, opposing views. When did we last hear this on Mediawatch?

As the number of broadcasts (and narrowcasts) increase, as community radio and television grow, as technology allows increasing interaction, I expect that public access to TV will grow. Not that we will not continue to enjoy programmes without access, just as we enjoy recordings of music. We will always want professionals to produce and package information and entertainment.

I suspect that the fundamental ethics relating to news and current affairs will continue to prevail. At heart they are based on high ethical standards. Of course, rulings on taste and decency will change. But with increasing numbers of providers, it is likely that different tastes will be accommodated within broad limitations. As they are in the print media. We can still of course expect the labelling of programmes and of course ways to protect children.

But we are moving now from scarcity to a degree of abundance never before contemplated. As I mentioned earlier, broadcasts emanate from outside the national territory. This, and the yet unknown advances in technology suggest that regulation of broadcasting will also change in ways which are difficult to imagine. What I am sure of is that the move to self-regulation or more properly co-regulation will not be reversed.

**Conclusion**

If I may conclude.

As I said at the beginning of this paper, the justification for regulation is the scarcity of the spectrum. The spectrum, even digitalised, is still limited so regulation must continue if only to prevent anarchy. But to this I expect that Parliament will still wish to ensure three core matters - a competitive industry, the protection of Australian culture, and of children and a respect for ethical and community standards.
Journalism Education: What the Editor Sees

Jack Waterford

The editor's desk is not a bad vantage point from which to survey journalism education. I see a fair sprinkling of the output. I suppose that in an average year I get about five to seven hundred applications from would-be journalists, and get to see about 100, looking over about 30 or so fairly closely.

Someone has told me that there are more students in journalism schools at the moment than there are journalists working on Australia's daily newspapers. It is something which I have to tell you that I cannot understand, even bearing in mind that many of the products look to broadcast journalism, to public relations or to other fields of endeavour rather than to newspapers. This year I have put on three cadet journalists - all of whom were graduates, though one was not a graduate of a journalism school. Around the metropolitans, I suppose, somewhere between 50 and 100 were taken on.

Most editors, of course, are like me in having no particular bias in favour of journalism schools and so I should think that the number employed, whatever it was, involved only a proportion, probably a bit over half, of graduates from journalism schools.

When I consider what that might suggest about the employment prospects of all of the students, I suppose that I am thus rather surprised that the attractiveness of journalism schools is, if anything, continuing to increase. The schools tend to have high, and increasing, TER barriers, almost up there with law and medicine in that great triumvirate of the professions, those who comfort the afflicted, those who afflict the comfortable, and us, of course, who aspire to do both.

By almost any, but as I shall say, not all, standards, the students who are coming out are demonstrably very bright. They are certainly brighter, on average, than entry journalists of my generation. My Deputy Editor, Crispin Hull began in journalism at about the same time as me. I was once his deputy.

One thing which we agree on is that neither of us would hire each other, or ourselves, if we were presenting for employment in journalism at the moment. We would probably be being eliminated in the very initial rounds.

Before I go on to some observations about what I am seeing, I might describe the way we work these eliminations at The Canberra Times. I do not pretend any great virtue in them, or even any necessary due process, though they are practical enough for our purposes. First, we get a fair throughput of interns who do work experience with us for periods of one or two weeks, sometimes longer, whom we get some chance to cast our eye over. We have a number of people we have seen or interviewed - some, of course, from the ranks of those who have interned, some who have been judged to have some potential and who have been given jobs, say as couriers - copyboys and girls - or on our secretarial staff where they have some insider opportunity both to write for publication as contributors and to get to know something of the ways of a newspaper or to impress us further.

And we get hundreds of written applications. I usually put applications aside for a while, then go through a pile at idle moments, dividing them into three piles. The first, by far the biggest, is those in whom at first glance I am not interested at all. It's not hard to get into this pile, but it helps if you cannot even spell my name, have literals, particularly bad use of apostrophes, running through the first few paragraphs of your letter, or if your letter, presenting nothing much out of the ruck about yourself, is also full of banality, particularly about why you want to be a journalist.

The second pile contains people whom I have not rejected, and whom I would be ready to consider, though I have no particular view at this stage about them. Every time this pile gets more than about 20 strong, I go through it with a bit more care and weed it down again. When I am weeding, I am looking particularly at any written work, and sign of spark of personality, and some indications of background, experience brain or way of thinking which seems either suitable or out of the ordinary. These people have not yet made it to my short list, but, on the other hand have not yet been discarded.

The third pile consists of people whom I have tentatively decided to interview and/or test, or whom I have already interviewed or tested and think should be in a short list around about the time I actually fix my mind on how many positions I might create. I have no formal intake, though, generally, I would usually be hiring about mid year. In this pile are some, though by no means all of those whom I have had a chance to look over through the interning or copykidding process, some who have simply wandered in and cornered me, and even the odd person who has not even formally applied but who for some reason, which may be idiosyncratic, strike me as good potential journalists. The list does not include any relatives or lovers, but it may well include people I know, including the children of journalists whom I know and who might be expected to have imbibed something over the breakfast table.

Periodically I set an exam. The current one has eight elements, and the marking is done by me personally, because it is by an idiosyncratic system. The first test involves general knowledge and current affairs questions - covering not only items of local, national and international news of recent times, but also current matters in the arts, sport, music and the sciences. You could call it a gigantic trivia quiz if you like, though I would insist that...
the answers to the questions posed could be found in newspapers of the past few months. It rates for about 50 per cent of the overall mark, which by my informal scaling system would be received by someone who got about 75 per cent. No one ever missed out just because they did not know the name of the Australian Rugby coach, our latest Nobel prize winner, or the portfolio held by Peter Reith, but ignorance concentrated over a wide area is, I have to tell you, fatal.

A subsidiary general-knowledge and current affairs test is given in which two things are referred to and the person must explain in a sentence or two in what way they have been linked in recent times. Typical such questions might be something such as Sandline and Bougainville, or the NSW SES and Stuart Diver. I do a simple test for numeracy. I do not necessarily expect my journalists to be mathematical geniuses, but I do expect that they have a base understanding of number and relative proportion, some capacity to understand percentages, and the capacity to do very simple two-step calculations. The most complicated question is no more difficult than dividing up a restaurant bill, something every respectable journalist ought to be able to do. I plagiarise from the Westpac Australian Schools Maths competition paper 10 questions from the paper set for high school year 7 and 8 students. Once I invited one of my economics writers to sit it. He failed. The test, which as I say, demands no more than is expected of a reasonably bright 13 year-old, is typically failed by about a third of those who get to the testing stage. I ought to exclude them on that basis alone, though I do not, but of those who get through to the next stage, almost all have passed it, because I assign about 10 per cent of the total marks for it and a few marks can count in the end.

I give a test of vocabulary, a multiple guess test rather like, though not directly plagiarised from, the ones you see in the Readers Digest. It pays to increase your word power. It always includes a few of my latest bugbear words - the sort of words I am trying to ban in the office altogether, certainly to journalists under the age of 45.

I give a proof-reading test in which the applicants are invited to scan some copy ready for production. They are told not to rewrite it, even if they think the English inelegant or they can imagine a better phrase, but to scan it for error. Typically, the doctored-up proof will have names in captions at variance with names in copy, spelling and grammatical errors, a whopper libel and a few other mistakes.

I give a grammar test in which students are given about 20 sentences and invited to correct them if they are wrong. Not all have mistakes; some have several. I cannot expect students to have a proper background in grammar and do not mark with the prescriptive ferocity I would prefer. I make generous allowance for the feels-wrong impulse, and allow people to get around the problem by rewriting the sentence in a way that avoids the suspected problem.

I give a reasonably humdrum press-statement, or collection of press statements, and ask them to write a report, of say six pars, perhaps with some particular angle. Usually, there are no tricks in this, but once, as it turned out, every single person missed a point which was there, if latently, and actually made an error of fact. At the time I had chosen the press statement - more or less at random from the facsimile machine, I did not particularly note the discriminator, but I have no apologies for it and might well deliberately concoct one or two into future exams.

And finally I give them a test focused on looking at some news judgement. One year, for example, I told them than in 1985, 1000 high school students across Canberra had been surveyed about a host of things, including their use of computers, whether or not they played sport, whether they spoke another language, whether they now or ever had smoked, and if so what brand and so on. A table of the results, for boys and girls, was presented.

I told them that this year, another random sample, this time of 2000 students had been surveyed with the same questions, and again gave a list of the results. To keep them on their toes, incidentally, the second table was presented in such a way that anyone doing a comparison had to divide the second lot of figures by two to be able to compare percentages.

I told them that a number of stories could be got up from the figures. I asked them to nominate four, each in no more than a sentence or two with just enough to make it quite clear to me that what the story and the angle was. Then, of each, I asked them to tell me in a paragraph or two how they thought the story might be followed up. Who would they interview? What further materials might they seek? What sort of discussion lines might it take?

Now, of course, there were 20 stories there, but some were dead obvious and I was not so interested in them. Or at least, if the person putting such an angle up failed to appreciate that with each of them there was a more subtle, often contradictory, story, they did not get as many marks. The total figures on anything, for example, might show a trend. Perhaps, say, more were participating in organised sport, or using computers at home. But I had deliberately concocted the survey so that, say, the trend with the girls ran in the opposite direction as the boys, or was very much more marked or whatever. So someone who said there was a story in the fact that the usage of home computers had increased by 20 per cent, but failed utterly to recognise that, according to my figures, all of that increase came from 40 per cent more boys using them and that the rate of use by girls had not changed, did not get anything like as many marks. Similarly, according to the figures I made up, the number of girls who smoked had actually fallen. But the number of girls who smoked a particular brand - Malboro in my figures - had doubled. The boys scarcely smoked that brand at either time. Those who spotted it, and suggested a story angle about what it was about that brand or the way that it was marketed which made it attractive to teenage girls, got many more marks than those who said there were signs that schoolkid smoking was on the decline.
I won't set that test again, but I go through the sorts of tests I set to give you some idea of the sorts of factors operating in my mind as discriminants. I will also quite cheerfully admit that there is a lot of room for the subjective involved, and that it might sometimes seem unfair that, at the end of the process, I will put marks on each set of papers, then come to my second-to-last shortlist with about 12 people. Typically, this test will divide those who are tested into about three groups. About a third will score, under my scaling, at about 75 plus. They go on. The second group, a bit more than a third, will be in the zone 60-70 and only some secondary consideration will get these to the next stage. A few will have more or less bombed and be only at about the 50 per cent level. These will not go through.

Remember, all of these were preselected, on the basis of applications, written work, transcripts, references and, sometimes, pre-interviews or recommendations, as the most likely candidates, certainly as being in the top ten per cent of those offering, so my marking is consciously hard. Whenever possible, which is usual, I mark the paper sitting beside the applicant and explaining what I am doing and why, and in this sense they nearly all get an interview, at which, usually, they can parade their wares, ask questions, and get some kindly advice from me.

There is no quota on age, race, sex or number of pimples on the face, but, generally, at this stage there are usually a few more women than men; and the search for interesting backgrounds or things which mark one as out of the ordinary tends to discriminate marginally against the mainstream yuppie, of which, frankly, the journalism schools are too full.

Which reminds me of a time when I was on a late-night ABC program when three old soaks were talking about the good old days and lamenting the hopelessness of modern journalists and so on, when someone, I think it was Brian Toohey, said, "When I started off, your typical cadet journalist was of Irish Catholic and rural background with a bit of a chip on his shoulder. Typically he has been to a Marist Brothers boarding school and he had gone into journalism not so much in a search for respectability, but because it was a bit raffish but allowed you to mix with an interesting lot of politicians and crooks."

Phillip Adams said to me, "What do you think about that, Jack?" I said "Well, speaking as an Irish Catholic who came from the bush and went to a Marist Brothers boarding school, it seems like bullshit to me, but who's to say?"

This year, I did something new, which I think worked well and which I shall do again. Those selected for the last stage were put to a panel which included two of our senior journalists and an executive. They were asked an array of questions about themselves, given some common questions about particular journalistic assignments - fact scenarios against tight deadlines and high pressure, invited to share their knowledge of a few running stories and so on. Each was consciously bowled a few lollipops in fields they had identified as special fields of interest, and tended to get marked down if, in particular, they could not hit sixers there. And each, at my request, was cross-examined closely on their reading habits, books they had recently read and their newspaper and magazine reading habits. As I shall lament in a minute, too few journalists these days read much and those who will not or cannot find the time to consume words will rarely in my opinion make much of a career out of them.

I adopted the committee's recommendations as to an order of merit. I deliberately did not decide how many I would take on until after I had the report from the committee, and I would reserve to myself a prerogative, if I thought it necessary, either of substituting my own judgment in a particular case, or of having a final stage of personal interviews. But in this case I did not.

On an earlier occasion, I had very ambivalent feelings about discarding a person who looked very promising on paper but who virtually talked his way out of it at interview. One reason why was that he had been shortlisted, I think, by each of The Age, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian, did not know why but figured it must have been something he said. In any event he was very much on his guard with me. I said to him for example that I had noticed he had been president of his student union. What had been his platform? I could see the shutters go down as he was thinking that for all he knew I was prejudiced against Catholics, or socialists or whatever, as he fended it by saying "Nothing much really, it was mostly about facilities. No matter how friendily I pursued it, he wouldn't give an inkling.

Now, frankly, he would not have had to do much research on me to discover, first, I had myself once been a student politician and of an infamy that meant I was unlikely to be prejudiced against anyone, and secondly, that I regarded mere engagement, doing anything out of the ordinary, political energy or believing in anything, anything at all, as praiseworthy in itself and acting in his favour.

When I argued with those who thought he should not make it, they made another point I thought fair enough. That is it is one of the most everyday tasks of a journalist to meet perfect strangers and to establish some intimacy with them, to size them up, get them talking and so on, and that he did not seem very good at it. I thought that true but was not convinced we had him right.

And, after letting him walk out without any great encouragement, I rang and invited him to lunch a week or so later. We got him reasonably drunk and discovered that in a less formal environment, he could let his guard down. I hired him. The Financial Review has pinched him from me in more recent times, damn their eyes.

In one sense one might say that anyone on the last shortlist, or the second to last shortlist was employable. I cannot necessarily guarantee that our systems are calculated to get the best of them, and in a buyers' market at that,
but I know of no better way: we are certainly now more intensive in our processes. At the end, we are focused rather more on questions of temperament, suitability, and what one might call the elusive it - at the very least a curiosity and interest in life - which marks the journalist but which does not necessarily in a CV or a university transcript.

So, what's the view from the editor's chair? Now remember, the systems I have in place are designed to show me only the best and the brightest, so, if I am critical or overgeneralising, I am doing it of what ought to be the pick of the crop.

I recognise that you are not trade schools and that it is not the primary function of the journalism faculties to have technically proficient junior reporting fodder for media magnates. In that sense I recognise too that the capacities which make for top marks in a university environment are not and should not necessarily be those things identifying you as a potentially outstanding journalist. I recognise that some of what I want or need is my responsibility to organise, or to discriminate for.

By the same token, however, I think that it should be well understood in the journalism schools that their existence as a primary source of journalistic fodder is still at a degree of sufferance by newspapers.

I do not mean by that that newspaper owners or editors should have any say in your funding or future or that you have to bow to the fashionable conception of the university as an employment training agency rather than a place for learning for its own sake.

What I mean is that there are not a few editors, myself included, who are yet to be persuaded that a journalism school will produce the best type of journalist. Particularly because a high proportion of the schools - really I exclude only Charles Sturt and UCH from this - are almost self conscious about failing to instil humdrum practical skills, the primary worth of a journalism degree is that it provides some evidence of critical faculties.

Frankly there is no evidence that it does so better than a degree in classics, or English, or law, or microbiology. The marginal advantage of the specifically journalistically-focused units exists, but is far from overwhelming if one is bright and has some practical aptitude for writing. Even in crude employability terms, a degree, or concentrated study in, fields outside the core journalism or communications disciplines, is often more useful than a concentrated study of some of the theoretical side of whatever it is they teach in some of the journalism schools. A journalist with some history, or law, or economic, or government, or science, or philosophy can put such skills directly to work.

That is not true of some of the communications theory some students are exposed to, even if it is no doubt important, meaningful and viable in its own right.

I will not so much focus on alleging deficiencies in your courses as deficiencies in the candidates, or, for that matter in many modern journalists.

I mentioned before that many do not read, or read much. They do not read books, or, if they do, it has tended to be, in recent times, only for specific information. They do not read for the sheer pleasure of it, in a search for new ideas, new ways of describing old ideas or as a distraction from the mundane and trivial world. A part of the problem attention span and some might argue that in these modern days they are collecting their information elsewhere, say from the television or the internet. Frankly, that's not my experience. People who are information hungry - and I expect would-be journalists to belong to that subset of the word - consume information voraciously from all media.

They only skim newspapers too, and I shall come back to that. What worries me, apart from their lack of engagement with the wider wide by a lack of reading habits implies, is that they are often not good at preparing stories which involve reading and research. A government department might prepare a 200 page article canvassing policy on nursing homes, full of new information and canvassing a lot of ideas. All too often, if I put it on a journalist's desk for a report or a feature, the journalist goes no further than the executive summary or the press release accompanying it. Now it may well be that in news terms it did not deserve more than 10 paras and that some other journalist or other person has quite adequately predigested it for regurgitation by the next journalist to lay their hands upon it, so, for the moment that might suffice. But the person who does that has hardly ever entered the arena of ideas and is of not much use to me in making my newspaper the forum at which different ideas will be fought out.

Ideas too are at a premium. I do not mean new ways of drawing the reader in - generally the calibre of the writing of these young men and women is workable - so much as seeing stories from different angles, habits of asking fundamental questions about matters which have always been generally assumed, a capacity to recognise that a new insight in a particular area might apply in another one, a habit of debate about concepts and philosophies, some critical faculties or professional cynicism in action, some passion and so on. There is too much cynicism and passion being focused at the supposed mindlessness of their working existences and not enough on the possibilities of it. Like all cynics, I am awfully sentimental, and I get an enormous thrill from a reporter with a sense of excitement asking fundamental questions about matters which have always been generally assumed, a capacity to recognise even if, usually, it is quickly clear from the cuttings files, regardless of where they are put.

It is a part of the journalist's function to look under rocks, to be cynical and sceptical, to cut down the tall poppies and so on, but it is also a part of the journalist's function to look for patterns and trends, to fit things into jigsaw puzzles and to be able to relate events in one place or time to others. That's one of the reasons why I put such a premium on general knowledge and knowledge of current affairs. But the knowledge one needs can rarely be
gained from a mere quick skimming of the paper, or a casual attention to the news broadcast. A lot of our kids are so bright and self-confident that their superficial knowledge of a wide range of things will enable them to bullshit their way through a lot of situations. At the end, however, they have to have close and detailed understandings of the matters they are to write about, and if they are to be journalists who make any difference, their stock of ideas and understandings have to be wider than those of the sources to whom they have spoken.

I might say in this context that we are not yet doing all that we can do to teach patterns of research. I am amazed at how few would-be journalists know even of the existence of, say, the Commonwealth Directory let alone how critical it is to anyone wanting to write anything about government in action. Particularly given the Internet, I am amazed at how little young journalists know about how to find out information quickly about some topic which has landed unexpectedly on their laps. I do not expect them to come ready equipped with contact books, but I am amazed at how little they know about how to compile one. And I am amazed at how little they use clippings libraries, or how, when they are led to them, they do not succumb to a tendency to want to browse them, something which if they did, instead of focusing immediately on the point at issue, might have steered them away from some gross misapprehension they are about to perpetrate, or reperpetrate on readers.

This brings me to reader focus. It is hard to get across the point that success in any journalistic enterprise turns on having succeeded in passing on relevant and important information to our readers. Many hardly think of readers at all. They are writing too much for each other, and tending to see professionalism in the job not in terms of serving the public but in a sort of unaccountability to anyone.

The feedback from their contacts is often scathing, and the criticisms made are not all sour grapes. They involve traditional heresies:

- hosts of minor facts wrong, creating an irritation level which overpowers having it broadly right;
- the journalist having some idea from which she or he could not be shaken, even by argument and presentation of fact, so that the presentation was a garble,
- and a lack of fairness of approach, as often as not instantly demonstrable merely from adjectives used in dealing with the actors.

I do not necessarily think we must die on an alter of objectivity, but I think that the true hallmark of professionalism is that one can understand and present the views of those with whom we disagree or those of whom our report implicitly invites the reader to disapprove. It is easy enough to create a straw man and knock it down; it is much more satisfying to present that person's actions and views in a way in which he cannot possibly disagree and then show him wrong.

It has always been alleged of journalists that they tend to be more left-wing, or left liberal, than the population at large. It may well be that the critical faculties, or habit of cynicism, or that those stock standard stories of journalism - that we focus on the failings of institutions rather than their successes - tends to gather journalists of strong viewpoints. Provided they have habits of fairness, I do not mind that a bit. What I do mind, though, is that stock of soft ideas taken from the backs of Corn Flakes packets, ingrained from primary school I think these days but hardly ever analysed. Warm cuddly ideas about the environment, say, are perfectly connected with Aborigines is inherently deeply spiritual and worthwhile, that businessmen are by definition crooks, that miners...
practical equipment of your students, not least on requiring the acquisition of shorthand, which I still believe important for a journalist, on subediting skills, the writing of short pieces, and on some basic grammar.

I am interested in the capacity to write six tight paragraphs as a 2000 words feature, and in signs of the development of editing skills which put a close eye on all of the modifiers. I ask my cadets to build up some libraries of books on words: Stephen Murray Smith, for example, Partridge, and Fowler, and think it perfectly reasonable that they get these tools of trade at their own expense.

At the least, for those of your schools which have acquired reputations for sending us products without these skills, that is a fact which works positively to your disadvantage. It does not mean that we do not look at your products, but we certainly do develop ideas - no doubt often in sweeping generalisation, often unfair - about how people have been prepared.

Now many of these problems are of course as much ours as they are yours, and they are also problems of our age and of our times rather than of the institutions we are passing through. I am, of course, not entirely critical. But I am increasingly coming to think that the very survival of newspapers several generations from now depends on the calibre of the people we are training at the moment. And we could all, probably, yet do a lot better.

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Jack Waterford is Editor of the Canberra Times, where he started as a copyperson in 1972. Jack was born on a western NSW sheep run and educated at boarding schools in Sydney. He has a law degree from the Australian National University. In 1977 he took leave from the Times to work for a developing Aboriginal health service in central Australia and later, as an organiser under the late Fred Hollows with the National Trachoma and Eye Health Program, whose report he helped to write. Jack was the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year in 1985 for his work with Freedom of Information legislation. He was a Jefferson Fellow in the United States in 1987. He has written numerous book chapters on journalism and on subjects as diverse as Aboriginal health, public administration, the High Court and freedom of expression, and the Petrov Royal Commissions of the 1950s. Jack Waterford has a long association with journalism education and is a tireless crusader for quality journalism.
Journalism Education – Shooting the Rapids of Change

Suellen Tapsall

What Profession Am I?

New technologies, primarily the Internet, make it possible for more and more people to enter an industry that was traditionally controlled by relatively few providers...economic constraints mean that staff and executives are under increasing pressure to deliver more with less...client/audience groups express continued dissatisfaction with the quality of the product they’re receiving and perceptions mount that that thing that has always been done is in a state of absolute flux....

I am, of course, both journalism and higher education. This paper in no way attempts to suggest that journalism and higher education are the only sectors experiencing these types of pressures...but to canvass the implications for those who have one foot planted in each industry.

Journalism is undergoing a rapid evolution due to global forces including concentration of media ownership, diminishing competition, rapid technological change, and pressures for accountability and ethical practice. At the same time, the higher education sector – in Australia and internationally – is being propelled towards change, with competition from new educational providers, increasing economic constraints, technological developments and changing student cohorts and demands. Journalism educators, who by definition straddle both the profession and the academy, are placed in the difficult position of endeavouring to understand and successfully navigate both shifting environments.

This paper follows a six-month international investigation into the perceived convergence of global media networks and higher education provision, and the implications for the Australian tertiary sector. New Media and Borderless Education: A Review of the Convergence of Global Media Networks and Higher Education Provision (Cunningham et al., 1998) was commissioned by DEETYA as part of its Evaluations and Investigations Program (EIP). The research team interviewed more than 140 people in 10 countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia, from government, industry, media networks and the higher education sector. It was a global mapping exercise – the first intensive effort to go beyond the rhetoric and analyse reality in this area. The result is a report of major significance for the higher education sector.

If the late 1990s herald the advent of the information age, then it is no wonder that concerns mount about the increasing influence and power of information processors and information brokers. The perception has been that global media networks (GMNs) are entering or about to enter the tertiary market; that overseas universities are going to extend their access to local students through new media; that new providers are coming, perhaps through franchising or similarly flexible arrangements; and that existing or new vocational and educational providers – specially private providers – are going to move into areas which have been the province of traditional higher education providers. To cut a long investigation short, the report concludes that while it is technically and technologically possible for GMNs to converge with higher education providers, this is not currently happening, and there are many reasons for GMNs not to get involved in more total ways with the sector in the near future.

So why the hype that led to the report?

The technology

One reason may be the increasing concern about the integration of media and communications into most aspects of life. There are common perceptions that those who control these technologies have the power to influence and change society and culture. There have been many headline and column inches devoted to the imminent arrival of the NewsCorp or Satellite U. The interactive nature of the technology may be another factor. The internet, as a converged medium, incorporates aspects of the telephone, the computer, the television, the radio, the newspaper and books, with an obvious outcome that it can be more things to more people at the one time. As a result, the waters around it are less clear.

The situation is further compounded by the blurring generally between content and carriage, and the push by many media organisations over the past decade or so to ‘vertically integrate’ – own the vehicle to carry the content and provide the programming or copy as well. This has always been a problem with hard-copy media – newspaper proprietors tend to own the printing presses and pay the newsroom salaries, just as book publishers pay the authors and print the books. It may be one of the reasons that some interviewees believe that if any media networks are likely to move more strongly into higher education provision, then it will be publishers, who are also perceived to have the most to lose in any technology-led teaching environment. They are also perhaps best positioned to take advantage of openings in the market. Corporations like McGraw Hill already have both content and major distribution systems.

If GMNs and the technology itself are not driving the shift to convergence and the perceptions of the need for change, then what is?
Failure to meet the needs of the stakeholders

Interviewees reflected a fairly widespread perception that universities are not meeting the needs of stakeholders - students, parents of students, employers, industry and so on. The argument goes that society has moved beyond the industrial age to the information age, but universities have not kept pace. Around the globe, nation-states and corporations are considering the economic benefits of an educated workforce and looking for ways to provide that education. Lifelong learning is the catchcry of traditional and non-traditional providers alike. In universities and corporate boardrooms around the world, this was presented as a supply and demand problem. If universities cannot supply what the markets (and the stakeholders) demand, then there's a need for new suppliers. If there's a demand, there may well be a cost benefit.

Increased economic constraints

Economic pressures are an unwelcome but increasingly important issue for the education sector. The government funding base of public institutions is shrinking, at a time when costs are rising and competition increasing - compelling universities to consider alternate methods of funding (ie user pays) or teaching (mass lectures to 500 students or online delivery). Many respondents drew comparisons between the funding questions facing higher education and the sectoral reform and deregulation of telecommunications, health and banking.

No need for traditional experts

Finally, there is a sense that the powerful technology tros - the Darth Vaders of the airwaves and television sets - no longer need content experts (like university academics) to act as authoritative sources. They can outsource or license educational content from various providers.

What became apparent through the course of the EIP investigation was that while GMNs were not about to become the primary providers of undergraduate education, there were new models of higher education emerging - and new providers, including corporate universities and for-profit and not-for-profit consortia.

These models were most obvious in America - for several reasons, including the relatively 'free-market' in which education operates (in comparison with Australia for example) and the fact that multi-modes of media (including the internet) are more developed and accessible at lower costs than in many other parts of the world. In America, multiple providers compete on a range of levels - from community college systems to the Ivy League. This environment has supported flourishing industries in education and training with significant variations in offerings, services and target markets. It is from here that many of the new providers with global aspirations are emerging. The US is the headquarters for corporations like Motorola and IBM, which spend more than 100-million and 400-million dollars US annually on inhouse corporate education. And it is in this competitive environment and with the acknowledgment of the demand for education in the 24-years and up market that real threats to traditional institutions become evident.

The report concludes that existing universities will continue to operate in a climate of increasing change, with commercial operations growing in importance and CITs offering ever greater opportunities for innovation and transformation across the spectrum of higher education activities, from administration through to teaching and learning. It suggests the challenge for higher education will be to adapt to a dynamic new environment, where lucrative national and international markets arising from the growing importance of lifelong learning are likely to be contested strongly by traditional universities, new forms of universities, and by non-university providers.

Most journalists and journalism educators are more familiar with the pressures confronting news organisations, so these need be mentioned only briefly. Not surprisingly, many fall into the same categories as those impacting on the higher education sector, although the details may be quite different.

The technology

Technology has had significant impacts on the practice and process of journalism. Newspapers are still dealing with issues related to the advent of radio and television. The Internet has added a whole new dimension to the issue, providing a cheap and relatively easy-to-access means of publication - with potential audiences which far outnumber the single TV channel. As Walter Isaacson, the managing editor of Time magazine says, the Internet gives more people the chance to speak and be heard, which is "wonderful for us in the mainstream media because it's more competition and keeps us on our toes" (Cacas, 1997). Godwin, from the Electronic Frontier Foundation, says a "vast influx of people are discovering that they can be journalists. We're also discovering that some of them are not good journalists" (Cacas, 1997). Whether or not you believe that the Internet is a significant threat to more traditional media, it is obvious that the technology makes more complicated such questions as "what is a journalist?" 'what is news?' and 'what does a news publication look like?"
the critics of the news far outweigh its supporters.

**Increased economic constraints**

Declining circulations, increasing costs and decreasing profits make the jobs of news editors more difficult than ever. When the news organisation runs only a skeleton staff then the job of the journalist becomes more difficult, making it even more likely that mistakes will be made through accident or omission.

**No need for traditional experts**

There is a perception that the master journalist – the skilled craftsman or professional practitioner – is no longer the necessary mainstay of the newsroom. In regional areas at least, there is an obvious trend for younger and less experienced staff to be operating in smaller newsrooms.

At the centre of this maelstrom is the journalism academic – although even such a suggestion may act to give the journalism academic more prominence than reality indicates. Journalism academics need to develop strategies to survive in an academic environment which is struggling to meet the challenges of change, while maintaining some relevance to an industry sector also in a state of flux. However, journalism academics traditionally have played a peripheral role in both sectors, a situation best summed up by James Ledbetter in an article in *Rolling Stone*...

What makes the J school especially vulnerable to shifting trends...is that it has never fit neatly into any slot. Medical and law schools are indispensable to their professions, while liberal arts and social science graduate programs are vital to the continued functioning of the academy. Journalism schools are a half-breed, commanding levels of respect that would embarrass Rodney Dangerfield. When campus recruiters from professional news organisations were surveyed recently, only 3 percent said they strongly agreed that journalism educators are on the cutting edge of journalism issues and the same number said that their organisations often rely on journalism professors for advice about newsroom issues. Similarly, Everette Dennis, formerly a senior vice-president of the Freedom Forum, discussing the perception of journalism schools within universities, once wrote that he knew of only two journalism-school deans this century who had become university presidents. J-school deans, he wrote, “are pariahs in not one but two sectors of society” (Ledbetter, 1997, p. 77).

The challenge then for journalism academics in Australia is to take advantage of the state of flux to redefine their role. The theory is simple: become more relevant to industry while developing a profile as a more valued part of the academy. Most journalism educators are attempting this in some measure – studying for postgraduate qualifications, for example, conducting quantitative and qualitative research into the profession, developing graduate certificate programs and conducting industry training. However, it is too early to say whether these are the right approaches. To successfully meet the current challenges, journalism academics need to understand what journalism is, the attributes of a good journalist, their role in preparing graduates for the marketplace, their role in the academy and the role OF the academy. This is a difficult ask when neither sector has adequate answers to those questions.

As journalism academics consider these issues in journalism programs at most universities in Australia, they may come up with different answers: answers shaped in part by the priorities of their institutions, local news organisations and personal preferences/commitments. Some possible outcomes of such navel-gazing could include:

- The development of programs to meet the demand for lifelong learning, the post-traditional undergraduate market. This may include CPE and postgraduate programs. These need to be flexible enough to meet the needs of industry and workforce – maybe delivered in the workplace, using block, intensive or online training methods. If there is a demand for such services, and existing journalism programs don’t provide them, then new and/or private for-profit providers will step in.
- The development of a theory of journalism informed by journalists (rather than media, communications or cultural theorists) that focuses on the philosophy of the news gathering process.
- Identification of niche or target markets and the development of programs for those markets.
- Identification of the ‘non-negotiables’, those things that journalism educators cannot or will not give up with respect to journalism or teaching.
- An understanding of the role of journalism education in the development of a healthy news media.

Perhaps in working through some of the above issues, journalism educators will more clearly identify, for themselves and their critics, the essential role of the journalism program and its relevance to both the academy and the industry. Journalism educators need to know that their programs make, and are duly recognised as making, a positive contribution to the shape and substance of the Australian media.

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Reflections on the higher education sector in the first section of this essay are based on the EIP investigation and subsequent report.

Suellen Tapsall initiated and coordinated the Australian government-commissioned research project investigating the convergence of global media networks and higher education provision. Tapsall is a journalism lecturer in Queensland University of Technology's School of Media and Journalism. Suellen is responsible for the development and delivery of a foundational unit in technological literacy for journalism students, set within the context of the profession. Tapsall has developed and delivered Internet training courses for Australian news organisations. She is part of a Queensland University of Technology team driving technological literacy research and strategy-development at a Faculty and institutional level. Tapsall also is a member of a QUT group focusing on the teaching and learning implications of technology usage in education and co-facilitator of one group addressing flexible delivery of education via the Internet. Current research areas include the 'virtualisation' and 'globalisation' of higher education, information policy, technology literacy and computer-assisted reporting. Tapsall has worked in the media industry for more than 15 years, for commercial and national broadcasters and newspaper groups.
Cyberspace: The Legal Black Hole

Rhonda Breit

The rapid change in technology is challenging the legal paradigms which have traditionally regulated the media. Therefore as educators of the new breed of journalists it is essential to not only be conversant with the new technology, but also to understand some of the pitfalls which come with it.

This paper cannot cover all the problems which confront journalists as they launch into “Cyberspace” but it will examine the liability of service providers in Australia regarding the posting of defamatory information on computer networks. Relying on the recent High Court decision in Thompson v Australian Capital Television, (Thompson 1996: 1-26) this paper will argue that the unique nature of ISPs means the courts should not be bound to classify them as primary publishers. Instead they should be regarded as subordinate publishers, entitled to raise the innocent disseminator defence. If a subordinate publisher is an innocent disseminator, then he/she did not publish the material and an action in defamation cannot be maintained.

A service provider is a company/individual or organisation which “provides direct access” to the Internet and on-line information centres. (Crumlish 1995: 178) The question of service provider liability is important to journalist educators for two reasons:

Many universities are service providers offering a full range of on-line services;
Many newspapers are going on-line and are/will be service providers.

Internet services
Before considering the law of defamation it is important to look at the nature of on-line services. While the type of access provided may differ, all ISPs offer these services:

• electronic mail
• newsgroups/forums
• information publishing
• file download
• real time chatting.

All of these services have different characteristics, but when used in conjunction, they offer an interactive information and personal communication service which really has no equivalent within traditional technology. It is a combination of a number of different services. The interactive nature of these services means the editorial control, in terms of content and time of publication, rests with the user/content providers and not the person who provides access to the service. This paper assumes the ISP is not the author or content provider.

The vast quantities of information available on computer networks, the immediate publication, the ease of access and the interactive nature of on-line networks, suggest the service provider is a facilitator rather than an active participant in the gathering and dissemination of information.

On-line publication and traditional publishing are vastly different. The type of ownership, the type of information which is available, the potential audience, and the interactive nature of on-line connections are just some of these differences. ISPs are not the writers or creators of information. They are not the editors of information because they do not have the ability to rewrite information before it is seen by the public; they have only the ability to refuse information. They are not in the same position as the media proprietor because they do not employ the writers and editors (ie the users) of information.

Service providers can exercise different levels of editorial control. However, no matter what controls they implement, the unstructured nature of the Internet, the interactive services offered, the immediate publication and the vast amount of information available make it impossible for service providers to be aware of the contents of information posted on their service before it is communicated to the public.

This paper will now examine the law of defamation and consider its application to ISPs. It will focus on the question of whether ISPs should be classified as primary publishers or innocent disseminators. This issue has not been considered by the courts, but reference will be made to the recent decision in Thompson v Australian Capital Television (1996).

The law in Australia
The law of defamation applies to on-line publications. That was settled in Rindos v Harwick (1994), where the Supreme Court of Western Australia ordered a user to pay $40,000 damages for defamatory remarks posted on a bulletin board service. This means that a content provider (a person who posts defamatory material on the Internet or other on-line services) will be liable if the statement:

• Meets one of the tests for a defamatory statement (At common law a statement is defamatory if it has the tendency to:
  - expose a person to hatred, contempt or ridicule;
- cause a person to be shunned or avoided without moral blame;
- lower a person in the eyes of right thinking members of society).

- The statement was published in that it was seen, read or heard by a third person;
- The person defamed was identified in the statement.

Professor Sally Walker observes that in the case of a newspaper article, everyone from the writer, editor, publisher, printer, proprietor and subject to the innocent disseminator defence, the distributor and vendor is potentially liable for the publication of defamatory material. (Walker 1989: 145) When trying to fit the ISP into the publication chain they should not be treated as the author, the editor or proprietor. At the most extreme interpretation, they should be classified as a modern day printer.

Although traditionally held to be primary publishers, the High Court in Thompson v Australian Capital Television (1996) has indicated support for the view espoused in McPhersons Ltd v Hickie (1995) that modern day printers should be allowed to raise the innocent disseminator defence. The obiter statements made by the High Court in Thompson augur well for the service provider who may wish to raise this defence. (Thompson 1996: 5, 9)

Thompson v Australian Capital Television (1996) dealt with the liability of Channel 7 and Channel 9 over the broadcasting of a current affairs program which defamed Thompson. Seven relayed the program pursuant to a licence agreement with Nine. It had no review system in place and simply relayed the program, without delay. The program which resulted in the action included a live interview with a young women identified as Vicki. During the interview Vicki alleged that her father had committed incest with her from the time she was seven years old. Thompson was in fact her stepfather but within the ACT where the program went to air, he was identified as her father.

The High Court noted that at no stage of the proceedings had anything emerged to suggest that there was any truth in Vicki’s allegations.

The court at first instance found the statements to be defamatory of the plaintiff but dismissed the action against Channel 7 because it had made out the defence of innocent dissemination. On appeal to the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory, it was held that the defence of innocent dissemination was not made out. But Channel 7 was found not to be liable due to a deed executed between the appellant and Channel 9.

On appeal to Full Court of the Federal Court, it was held that the defence of innocent dissemination was not available but Channel 7 was released from liability on other grounds.

The matter then came before the High Court which considered the issue of innocent dissemination. Other issues such as joint tortfeasors were considered but are not relevant to this discussion.

The High Court held the rebroadcaster to be liable as a primary publisher. The court went on to say that if the innocent disseminator defence was available, the rebroadcaster would still have failed because it could not be shown that Channel 7:

- Had no actual knowledge of the defamatory nature of the material;
- Had no implied knowledge of the defamatory nature of the material; and,
- That lack of knowledge was not due to the failure to exercise reasonable care. (Thompson 1996: 4)

In examining the question of who is a publisher and the availability of the innocent disseminator defence, the court looked at the level of control exercisable over the defamatory material. It found Channel 7 authorised the publication of the defamatory material and as such was a primary publisher. The defence of innocent dissemination was not available.

It went on to say that even if Channel 7 was categorised as a secondary/subordinate publisher, it had not made out the innocent disseminator defence because it could have made itself aware of the defamatory nature of the publication. The fact that the program was a current affairs program suggested there was a high risk of defamatory material being aired. Channel 7 should have put into place a means by which it could check the program for defamatory material. The lack of knowledge was due to a failure to exercise due diligence, and the innocent disseminator defence was not made out.

In reaching its conclusion the court made a general examination of the availability of this defence. Obiter statements were made about the liability of printers in light of technological changes which meant printers really only had a right to veto defamatory material once they had been made aware of the nature of the publication. (Thompson 1996: 5, 9)

Previously this paper suggested that service providers are in a similar position to that of modern printers, therefore it could be argued by analogy that the obiter statements made regarding the liability of printers could be applied to ISPs.

This issue was to be considered by the High Court in McPhersons Ltd v Hickie (1995), an action brought by Hickie against the printers of the book The Gambling Man. That matter was settled. However, the obiter statements made by the High Court in Thompson (1996) suggest the defence should be available. The question as to whether a printer/service provider would be able to successfully argue the defence, should be considered on a case by case basis.

However, even if the court did view it as being reasonable to require service providers to screen material for
defamatory comments, there are strong policy reasons to expand the innocent disseminator defence to make it available to service providers.

It was noted in Emmens v Pottle, the case where the innocent disseminator defence was first recognised, that "any proposition the result of which would be to show that the common law of England is wholly unreasonable and unjust, cannot be part of the common law of England". Gaudron J made reference to this quote in Thompson. (Thompson 1996: 7)

ISPs should be aware of practices such as flaming and the high likelihood of defamatory material being posted on-line service, however it is suggested holding ISPs liable would be "unreasonable and unjust".

In view of the climate towards greater freedom of expression and the willingness of the High Court to interpret the common law in light of technological developments and the express obiter which states that "there is no principle why a mere distributor of electronic material should not be able to rely upon the defence of innocent dissemination if the circumstances so permit", the innocent disseminator defence should be available to ISPs. (Thompson 1996: 6) Because it is impossible to implement a screening process for defamatory material, ISPs should also be able to satisfy the three elements of the defence.

Conclusion:

The liability of ISPs for defamatory material posted on their service is unclear. The interactive nature of on-line services and the vast quantity of information which is available means there is really no analogous service to which the common law can turn to determine their liability. Therefore it should be treated as an area of law without authority. In determining the level of responsibility, the courts must look at the type of service offered and the level of editorial control which can be provided, treating each case on its merits. Where an interactive service is offered, judges should exercise their judicial discretion to distinguish on-line service providers from traditional publishers and allow the providers to rely on the innocent dissemination defence.

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Pagination: Friend or Foe?

Jacqui Ewart

Introduction

Sub-editors have sometimes been accused of, at the least, being less than complimentary about new technologies and at their worst of being 'latter day luddites' (Cass 1990:44) when it comes to such changes. Perhaps this is because they have essentially borne the brunt of changes in work practices with the changing technological environment of newsrooms. The very nature of the sub-editor's job has altered with the introduction of new technologies, such as pagination. In some instances this transition, from familiar to new work practices, has been fraught with difficulties. Journalists have for the most part avoided the major upheavals that sub-editors have faced in the past decade or so. Little research has been undertaken into the recent technological changes that Australian newspaper sub-editors have experienced. There is a dearth of inquiry into the elements that help ensure the success and acceptance of new technologies in the newsroom. Such research holds possibilities for the producers of newspaper technologies, whether it be in improving existing and future products or developing more user-friendly programs. For newspaper managers, such studies could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities and difficulties involved with the introduction of new technologies in the newsroom.

This paper presents a comparative examination of the experiences and attitudes of sub-editors at two Queensland dailies: a regional and a metropolitan newspaper. Sub-editors at the regional daily had a difficult and arduous introduction to pagination. Their attitude towards this new technology was decidedly negative and their dislike of pagination can be directly related to the approach taken by the organisation during and after its introduction. The sub-editors at the metropolitan daily newspaper were generally quite positive towards the new technology, with the overwhelming majority approving of the approach taken to the introduction of pagination. The differences in attitudes between the sub-editors at these two newspapers, can be traced back to three essential ingredients in introducing any new technologies in the workplace: planning; resource allocation and most importantly investment in and consideration of the people factor.

Methodology

This study was approached by way of an ethnography of the sub-editors. Interviews were held with sub-editors from each newspaper, six months after the introduction of pagination. This approach provided the best way of obtaining detailed information from sub-editors about their experiences with and attitude towards pagination technology. A semi-structured interview schedule was designed prior to the interviews, enabling sub-editors to raise pertinent issues and observations during the interviews. The data is presented separately for each newspaper. The advantages and disadvantages of pagination are identified because the attitudes of sub-editors towards pagination were contingent on whether they viewed certain aspects of the technology as an advantage or disadvantage.

THE REGIONAL NEWSPAPER

Disadvantages

Sub-editors at the regional daily newspaper felt the advantages of pagination were outweighed by its disadvantages which fell into the following areas: changes to work practices; additional stress; and increased workloads. These disadvantages were major issues for the sub-editors and effected their attitude towards the technology. They felt many of their concerns about the new technology had not been addressed and the problems they were experiencing had led to an overwhelmingly negative attitude towards pagination.

Changes to work practices

Sub-editors felt their work practices had altered with the introduction of computers, rather than word processing or copy input systems. They had to learn a new set of proficiencies in the operation of complex computer programs and systems. Many felt sub-editing ability was now second to the ability to operate particular computer programs and design layouts. Sub-editors unanimously felt they had taken on many of the duties previously performed by compositors. They had to develop a considerable knowledge of typography and design, while not possessing the fundamental basic skills required for such tasks. Production schedules at the regional newspaper also changed because of the new technology, with earlier deadlines and less room for manoeuvring in the event of major news events.

Additional stress

Sub-editors reported increases in the amount of work-related stress they suffered because of: pagination and subsequent increased workloads; management's high expectations in relation to productivity; and the organisation's expectations that it would receive a major return on its investment in the technology. A key factor in the increased levels of stress was that the sub-editors felt they had more responsibility for the final product. However the checks and balances that once characterised newspaper production and relieved some of the sub-editors' stress, such as proof readers and check subs, no longer existed.
Pagination: Friend or Foe?

Additional workload

The regional newspaper sub-editors said pagination had increased their workload. There was a rise in the number of pages they had to layout, and this task was considerably more time consuming because of their need to familiarise themselves with the new computer program. The time taken to lay a page also increased because of the change from laying pages on paper to computer screen.

These factors all impinged on the attitudes of these sub-editors towards the new technology.

Advantages

The regional daily newspaper sub-editors identified three advantages of pagination: improvements in: photo handling ability, page presentation, and colour quality. They felt these advantages were somewhat minor when compared to the many disadvantages they had experienced.

Sub-editors considered the advances in photo handling ability and the possibilities pagination offered for management of graphics, as the major benefits of pagination. Pagination provided the convenience of fine tuning graphics and remarkable improvements in photo reproduction quality and therefore improved coverage (particularly pictorially) of major events, including those outside the local area.

The second major area of evolution, with the introduction of pagination, was in the level of control sub-editors had over presentation of news pages. While the transition from paper to screen was not without its difficulties, designing and laying news pages on screen assisted sub-editors to visualise layouts. The divergence between sub-editor’s ideas and compositor’s notions of how a page should be laid out all but disappeared with pagination and the subsequent demise of the compositor.

The regional daily newspaper sub-editors said pagination had the potential to improve the readability of a page, but page design and knowing what worked on a layout, continued to demand a high level of skill. Pagination increased the number of design elements and typographic tools available to sub-editors. The new technology means sub-editors are capable of producing a cleaner, neater end product for the readers.

Of course, those news organisations that invest in pagination systems also benefit from the associated savings in resources, with the demise of many composing room costs and new practices such as networking. Within this newspaper group the share index, TV guide, information page and race fields are networked resulting in considerable savings in time, human resources and money.

The attitude of sub-editors towards pagination at this regional newspaper was overwhelmingly negative. While the sub-editors were able to see the possibilities pagination offered, they were unable to realise them because of the problems they had experienced with its introduction.

THE METROPOLITAN NEWSPAPER

Disadvantages

The metropolitan sub-editors said there were relatively few negatives associated with the introduction of pagination. Most of the problems they experienced were minor and therefore their attitude towards pagination was decidedly positive.

These disadvantages fell into the following categories: increased workload; some system inadequacies; and some negatives in changes to work practices.

Increased workload

The sub-editor’s major complaint about the introduction of pagination was that it meant an increased workload. They had to lay more pages than before pagination was introduced, with subsequent problems in meeting deadline. As well as controlling page design, layout sub-editors now have to assign stories, place stories, crop photos, follow up and edit pictures.

System inadequacies

Sub-editors unanimously complained that there were many minor ‘fiddly’ things that they had to manipulate because of program bugs. Several sub-editors thought the new system would be perfect, but they experienced some initial problems and quirks with it. A particularly problematic area was the balancing of legs of type, which often took additional time and effort on the sub-editor’s behalf.

Negative changes in work practices

The new technology led to minor changes to work practices, particularly a loss of social contact between sub-editors and compositors. Sub-editors felt locked to their machines, denied the human interaction they enjoyed prior to pagination. Many sub-editors complained that the new technology shifted their focus to page design, removing the emphasis from good writing and sub-editing. Sub-editors experienced considerable difficulties in adapting to laying news pages on computer screens.

Advantages

Advantages of the new system at the metropolitan newspaper far outweighed the few disadvantages that staff encountered. Advantages were identified as: improvements in control; and vast improvements on the previous system.
Control

One of the biggest advantages unanimously supported by all layout sub-editors was that pagination gave them a feeling of control over the final appearance of a news page. Sub-editors were overwhelmingly appreciative of the fact they were no longer subject to the moods or whims of composing room staff, who they felt often misinterpreted their instructions. Sub-editors believed pagination enabled them to see the finished news page as a package, rather than as an isolated step in a production process. The time frame between laying a page and seeing the final product had decreased dramatically. Sub-editors unanimously considered laying pages on a computer to be a quicker and more satisfying process than the hard copy system.

Improvements on previous systems

The metropolitan newspaper sub-editors described their newspaper's new computer system (Cybergraphic) as a major revolution and advance on their previous system. Vast improvements were made in such areas as H and J speed, with the new system taking mere seconds to justify a story, which sometimes took up to 15 minutes on the old system. Layout sub-editors thought the new, superior system had benefited work practices enormously, with almost total elimination of down time and system crashes. They said this was due to the considerable planning that was undertaken prior to the introduction of the technology.

Conclusions

Overall, the experiences of sub-editors at the metropolitan newspaper during the introduction of pagination compared favourably to those of staff at the regional daily. Metropolitan staff attributed the success of the new system to the extensive planning, financial commitment, on site support and consideration of the human factor by the organisation when introducing new technology. The regional daily staff attributed the considerable difficulties with the introduction of pagination in their newsroom to the lack of adequate planning, the lack of adequate training, and the relatively small capital outlay on technology.

Staff at the regional daily were critical of the newspaper's parent company for failing to learn from the experiences and problems that occurred at other sites in the group where pagination was introduced. Metropolitan sub-editors said their organisation had learned many valuable lessons through the introduction of pagination at its other sites. They had benefited considerably from these lessons.

Other newspapers moving down the pagination road need to take heed of the lessons learned within these two newspapers. While the parent company of the metropolitan newspaper established successful methods for the introduction of new technology in its newsrooms, the regional daily's parent organisation has yet to do so. The approaches taken to introducing new technology have a lasting impact on the attitudes of newspaper staff towards technologies (Singer et al 1996:44). Newsrooms introducing pagination or other technologies could learn from these two case studies, preventing the acrimony, loss of time and money that poorly planned introductions of new technologies can cause.

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Jacqui Ewart worked as a journalist in regional newspapers for six years before moving into the media and communication field. She worked as a media manager for Queensland Health for five years, but continued her links with newspapers, writing feature articles, columns and other items. During that time she completed a BA by part-time study through Central Queensland University and she has recently submitted her thesis for a Master of Arts (Aboriginal Studies) through South Australia University. Her research interests lie in the representation of indigenous Australians in the media as well as access to media for indigenous Australians. This research is leading into areas that examine the role of media in making regional identity. Other research interests include new technologies and their effect on work place practices in newspapers.
Whose ethics are they anyway?

Ian Richards

The criticism of the behaviour of some journalists after the Thredbo tragedy and, at an international level, the trenchant condemnation of the media's performance over the death of Princess Diana helps explain why journalism ethics is such a controversial subject. But unethical behaviour on the part of some journalists does not adequately explain the intensity and divergence of views on the general subject.

Upon further examination, it gradually becomes clear that the underlying reason for this situation may lie not with individual journalists but with the broad field of journalism ethics itself. The problem begins with the lack of clarity in defining the field. According to Inule and Anderson:

"Ethics is that branch of philosophy that helps journalists determine what is right to do in their journalism."

(1997: 443)

Belsey and Chadwick argue that "much of the practice of journalism must be described and analysed in terms of a set of concepts which are essentially ethical, terms like freedom, objectivity, truth, honesty, privacy. Even democracy, the context in which so much discussion of the media takes place, is really an ethical term ..." (1992: xi).

Hurst and White present a cogent case as to why journalists "must pay much more visible attention to the ethics of their business. They must open themselves willingly to more debate about the principles and application of media ethics and revise their entrenched positions when necessary" (1994: xi). And Christians, Rotzoll and Fackler reassure us that "Those who care about ethics in the media can learn to analyze the stages of decision making, focus on the real levels of conflict, and make defensible ethical decisions" (1983: 2).

But already some confusion is creeping in - journalism ethics is a branch of philosophy; something that is a practical part of news-gathering; a provider of terms for describing and analysing the practice of journalism; and something which journalists ignore at their own peril.

If we look at the many studies which have been carried out into journalism and journalists, we find that the majority can be grouped under one of three broad approaches - sociology, political economy, and cultural studies. (Schudson 1996: 143). Most sociological studies have focused on social organisation, occupations, professions and the social construction of ideology; those based in political economy have concentrated on the relationship between the product of the news-gathering process, the structure of the state and the economic basis of news organisations; while most cultural studies work has examined the significance and implications of cultural traditions and symbolic systems.

Studies conducted within these three broad approaches have employed a range of different methodologies and theoretical frameworks, and have borne fruit of varying degrees of usefulness. But, whatever other strengths they might have, these approaches have one glaring weakness in common - invariably, they marginalise ethical issues, which tend to be treated as relatively minor matters associated with the day to day practice of journalism rather than issues deserving serious study in their own right. As a consequence, they have little to say about the complex ethical questions many working journalists face on a regular basis.

A far more fruitful approach to understanding journalism ethics is derived from the fields of philosophy and applied ethics. Indeed, one of the key ethical guidelines for contemporary Western journalism can be traced back to Aristotle's "Golden Mean". For Aristotle's view that moral virtue is appropriate location between two extremes is surely the logical foundation of the notion in serious journalism that the sensational is derided and the virtues of balance, fairness and equal time are recognised (Christians 1983: 10). And a number of other principles underlying journalism ethics have their origins in the work of the great philosophers.

One of the most significant contributions during the twentieth century was that of the Hutchins Commission (1947), which stated that to allow the unchannelled and uncontrolled distribution of ideas and information was neither responsible nor beneficial to society and could not be considered ethical. It received its most articulate exposition in the work of Siebert et al who not only gave it its name - Social Responsibility theory - but presented an additional argument that the power and near monopoly position of the media impose on them an obligation to be socially responsible, to see that all sides are fairly presented and that the public has enough information to reassure us that "Ethics is that branch of philosophy that helps journalists determine what is right to do in their journalism."


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But the closer one looks at the theoretical foundation underlying journalists’ ethics, the less substantial that foundation appears to be. One of the consequences is the confusion, referred to earlier, as to what constitutes “journalism ethics” and the part that ethics should play. And who pays the greatest price for this confusion? Almost without exception, it is the most public player in the equation - individual working journalists. In all the confusion and ensuing discussion over journalism ethics, one key aspect has remained virtually ignored. This is the failure to deal squarely with the reality that, while obviously he or she is an essential unit of ethical responsibility, the individual journalist doesn’t operate in a social vacuum. Most journalists are employees and, increasingly, employees
of large companies or corporations whose primary aim is to maximise the return to shareholders.

At a theoretical level, this means that we need to do rather more than consider the role of the journalist in society. The basic unit of understanding in journalism ethics should not be the individual journalist but the journalist as an employee of a corporation to which he or she generally feels some loyalty and around which the prospects of individual success are inextricably interwoven.

One field which has considered many of the ethical dilemmas associated with such situations - albeit in a different context - is management in general and business ethics in particular. This area has yielded many useful concepts and some of these appear to have considerable relevance to journalism. One example is Jackall's notion of embeddedness - People get embedded in their jobs, their positions in the company, and they have trouble seeing beyond the pressures they face. The result is a kind of blindness and an inability to see the larger view (Jackall 1988).

Another, also from Jackall, is his argument that "At any given moment in most major corporations, one can find a vast array of vocabularies of motive and accounts to explain, or excuse or justify, expedient action. Still another useful notion stems from the debate in business ethics over what strategies and means are ethical and appropriate when a party to a conflict wants to win or maximise outcomes and in particular what constitutes appropriate forms of bluffing, lying, and other distortions of "truth" in the service of "maximising outcomes" (Lewicki 1983: 424).

And there are many other relevant debates in the field of business ethics, too numerous to mention here. They include the ethical debates over achieving ends and means; the business perspective on ethical relativism, often used to explain and justify certain common business practices and principles; and the ethics of compromise. The latter may be of special relevance to journalism because there are many ways in which journalists face pressure to compromise personal values - office politics, pressure to advance one's journalistic career by being more "gung-ho" than one's colleagues; returning with the story regardless of the (ethical) cost; the need to be seen to be producing a constant stream of publishable material even if nothing especially worth publishing has occurred.

For most journalists, ethics begins when they face a conflict between their own better judgement and the demands of the organisation (often represented by a chief-of-staff or news director pushing them to get the "best" story). At this level, there is often a conflict of ethical values - too much honesty will compromise the journalistic commitment to protect one's sources; the individual journalists' obligations to his or her superiors may conflict with obligations to those they have interviewed for their story; and so on. At a practical level, the individual needs the skills to balance these corporate, professional and personal pressures.

What is needed is a theory which accommodates all of these aspects. While this paper does not propose to provide any definitive answers, several conclusions seem clear. First, that what might be called the standard approach to journalism ethics is open to serious objections. Although it highlights the role of the individual as moral agent, it largely ignores the social and economic context in which journalists operate. Indeed, there isn't even common agreement as to which ethical decision-making model is most appropriate.

Second, those who have tried to take account of the wider context have frequently drawn on political and legal philosophy to come up with approaches which examine the social-political system as a whole before focusing on the individual. The trouble with these strategies is that, while they are undoubtedly useful for examining questions of media policy or programming and content, they go too far in the other direction and as a result under-emphasise the role of the individual.

Third, the alternative major strategy which has been devised to accommodate the objections raised above has been to draw upon Aristotelian or virtue ethics. But while their emphasis on moral sensitivity, practical application, and a commitment to core values has some appeal, these approaches pose considerable problems at the level of individual virtue and character.

Finally, as indicated earlier, the field of management and business ethics is in the process of confronting many of these dilemmas. And in that field, some observers are beginning to argue that the only genuine solution lies in an accommodation between the various ethical paradigms. If there is a strong case for business ethics to take the best from each of the major paradigms, surely a similar case can be made out for journalism. Such a combination holds out the promise of an approach to ethics which would equip journalists to cope with ethical conflicts and at the same time provide a comprehensive and coherent philosophical basis for contemporary journalism. And wouldn't that be a breakthrough?

References
Whose ethics are they anyway?


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The Ethics of Writing a Journalistic Biography

Matthew Ricketson

Early one Sunday morning in September 1990 as I staggered out of bed in the direction of the bathroom I registered the fact that my two young children were watching television. No surprise there, but the images on the screen did surprise me. A young boy questioning his father about where he came from, the stammering father giving him the usual malarkey about cabbage patches, the boy promptly going outside the vegie garden.....and finding a real live green baby in the cabbage patch! I watched and laughed as the baby bonded with the boy so fully that whenever the baby was handed to anyone else, it held its breath and turned purple. This made for a lot of comedy, as did the young boy’s attempts to behave as a responsible father. I was bowled over. This program was like nothing I had ever seen as a child. Yes, it was very well made and hilarious and poignant, but more than that the idea for the plot was breathtakingly original. The whole story seemed to have come from some other place. My children loved the series, “Round The Twist”, and from that point we would sit down together on Sunday mornings at 8.30 and watch it together. I decided I wanted to write about the show and so put together a piece for Time Australia magazine where I was then on staff. Then I interviewed the man whose stories had been adapted for “Round The Twist”, Paul Jennings, and profiled him for The Australian’s colour magazine in 1992. The article interested the 60 Minutes team, who in turn profiled Jennings later that year.

Over the next few years I wrote again about Jennings and began wondering whether he merited more than just another magazine article.

By 1996 Jennings was far and away the most popular children’s author in Australia: he had sold about 3 million copies of his books; a comprehensive 1995 Australian Bureau of Statistic survey found he was actually the most popular author in the country, ahead of Bryce Courtenay; his book signings are sellout events (one in Perth lasted four hours), and “Round The Twist” is widely regarded as the finest children’s series produced in Australia. As another local children’s author once said of Jennings: “Paul could run out of petrol anywhere in Australia and all he’d have to do would be find the nearest 12-year-old and he’d have help.”

Such popularity was one reason to write a biography; the other was that Jennings’s life story was fascinating. He only started writing for children at the age of 40, after establishing a successful professional career. He only started writing because one of his own children was struggling with reading. As he was a lecturer in children’s language and literature, he felt increasingly frustrated, even desperate, that all his expertise could not help one of his own children. Andrew was actually one of two Aboriginal children who Jennings had adopted. These adoptions came just after the end of the Stolen Children generation. These days Jennings feels guilty about adopting Andrew and Sally. He knows he did it with the best intentions but believes it was wrong for them to be separated from their own culture. Both adopted children returned to their families of origin in their teens and have sought to maintain a relationship with their natural and adoptive families. The separation and the straddling have been painful for both children and the two sets of parents.

Jennings also suffers bouts of depression, at least partly related to his personality. He is a kind of man-child. His ability to recall the emotional texture of his childhood is the reason he writes so compellingly for children and connects so deeply with them. It is a blessing that has given him enormous success. It is also a curse, he believes. He is emotionally immature, or at the least, fragile.

His struggles with this led him in 1997 to enter psychotherapy.

All of this added up to a powerful story of an extremely gifted and complex man who is making a great contribution to the lives of children both here and overseas. It took me about a year to persuade Jennings to agree to the project. He was not particularly interested at first and was deeply worried that various family members would be hurt in the process. He eventually agreed in early 1996 because he knew me and trusted me as a professional and ethical journalist. He was also worried that someone else might write an unauthorised book. As to any formal agreement or contract between Jennings and myself, there was none. I was ambivalent about this at the time and still am. It might have been wise to have a legal agreement between us, formally setting out the terms and conditions of the biography, but such an agreement seemed to mitigate against the trust that had been established between us, and it was this trust that had prompted him to agree to the book in the first place. We agreed to some ground rules:

1. From his point of view, he said he did not mind what I wrote about him but he did not want others, particularly his ex-wife and his children, to be hurt in the book. He was acutely sensitive about his adopted Aboriginal children, whom he had once written about, under a pseudonym, in an article that upset their natural parents. Andrew also had a criminal record and at the time of delivering this paper (December 1997) was in gaol.

2. From my point of view, it was essential that while his cooperation (in interviews, documents etc) would be invaluable it was essential that the book be independent. I agreed that he would be able to see the manuscript and to correct any factual errors. If he disagreed with my interpretation of people or events I would ensure his view was represented. I also said I would always be prepared to negotiate on sensitive areas, but that I would not give him power of veto over the manuscript.
I conceived the biography as a piece of book-length journalism.

This is a sizeable but subterranean area of the news media industry. Many excellent books have been written by journalists who have used their professional training and experience to produce work that have made an impact but whose journalistic roots have been overlooked. Two recent examples include *The Devil’s Candy*, a 1993 account by Wall Street Journal reporter, Julie Salamon, of the making of expensive flop movie “The Bonfire of the Vanities,” and *One Summer, Every Summer*, Gideon Haigh’s book about the 1995-96 Ashes tour of Australia. Haigh is a Melbourne-based journalist and author whose latest project is a book about Bankers’ Trust that stemmed from a magazine article he wrote about them.

The specific model for the Jennings biography was the long profiles in *The New Yorker* that are often published as books. I had been particularly impressed by John Lahr’s 1991 book *Dame Edna Everage and the Rise of Western Civilisation* which began as a profile for the magazine. I planned to use journalistic methods to research and write the book; that is, I would interview as many people as I could, comb the relevant documents and do lots of fly-on-the-wall observation. Such first-hand observation would enable me to write parts of the book as dramatic scenes rather than as conventional narrative. In keeping with this journalistic approach I decided to abandon the traditional cradle-to-grave chronological biography and find another structure that was both more interesting and suited to Jennings’s upside down view of the world.

The principle benefits of book-length journalism, I found, are:

1. You have time to research and space to write in more detail, with - hopefully - more subtlety and depth.
2. You get to interview and re-interview the subject as often as you want. You do not have the historian’s problem of dealing only with the documents.
3. You can report and write up vivid scenes that dramatise the subject’s life and personality.
4. You get close to the subject and thereby gain material that goes way beyond the constraints of daily journalism.

The principle problem with this approach is:

1. You get close to the subject. It is a two-edged sword. Becoming close to the subject makes it hard to write about them dispassionately. You need to know them inside out, but you also need to able to stand back and give a range of perspectives on the subject.

What I realised was that book-length journalism is different to daily journalism. You may never utter the historian’s plaintive cry “If only I could talk to Chifley about bank nationalisation” but what you do have is a living, breathing human being in front of you. Over time, in this case a couple of years, you get to know them well. It is impossible not to develop a relationship with them. Nobody ever gave a good interview to an automaton. Then, and this is the strange part, you ask them all sorts of questions that you would not even put to a close friend. You check what they say with other people, against the documents. You come back to them and query their version of events. You have the audacity to assess and interpret their lives.

Midway through this process, I asked myself why I felt it was so strange when, as a newspaper journalist, I had been doing essentially the same work, on a smaller scale, for years. I realised that all the journalism I had done, even the profiles I had spent weeks preparing, were essentially smash-and-grab exercises. As a journalist you see only a snapshot of a person’s life. Even if you think you are behaving ethically, it is easy to slide over the impact your work has on another person’s life because your contact has been brief. Before you can get too worried you are on to the next story. You can’t do that as a biographer.

Jennings was a model of cooperation and candour. No biographer could ask for more, but he and his (second) wife were deeply anxious about the whole business. Who could blame them? Really. Like most subjects he was initially seduced by the flattery that inheres in biography. Standing before him was a charming and intelligent man who was saying in effect, “I’m going to devote the next two years of my life to your life.” But then he got to work and starting peeling back the layers of vanity and self-deception that everyone is prey to.

There are events and incidents in any person’s life that they would not want publicised but a biography that relates only what its subject wants to tell is not really a biography but an extended press release - or an autobiography. When I buy a biography part of what I pay for is a broader perspective on the subject’s life and work, a sense of the whole person, their achievements, their struggles, their blind spots and their flaws. Many biographers opt for the simple path of hagiography or hatchet job. The first type makes the subject - and only the subject - happy, the other titillates the voyeur and gossip in us all. Far harder is to play fair with both the subject by sympathising with them as a human being and with the reader by providing as full a portrait as possible.

With this in mind, I found myself nutting out two general guidelines. First, anyone likely to read the book would come to it because of what Jennings had achieved as a children’s author and so the focus should be on his work rather than his private life, except where it illuminated his writing. The second was about finding a way of enacting the first. At times during my research I felt, as American journalist Janet Malcolm has written, like I was not having an elevating literary experience but listening to backstairs gossip, reading other people’s mail and tiptoeing down the corridor to peep through the bedroom keyhole. What Malcolm does not point out in *The Silent Woman*, her excoriating study of the Sylvia Plath biography industry, is that sometimes no matter how much you signpost to interviewees areas you need not know about, they tell you anyway! In the end your gut is heavy with
gossip. You are busting to pass it on.

But then I remembered a scene from one of my favorite plays, Tom Stoppard's "Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead," where the Player shows Ros and Guil how mortified he was when they left in the middle of his performance. "Think, in your head, now, think of the most...private...secret...intimate... thing you have ever done secure in the knowledge of its privacy....Are you thinking of it? Well I saw you do it!"

I arrived at a second, simpler guideline: how much would I want people to know about me if I was the subject?

That was a sobering thought.

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Journalism Educators’ Perplexing Quest for Relevance and Respect

Jay Black

The nuts and bolts of journalism (shorthand, keyboarding, interviewing, story crafting, editing, photography, etc.) are easily mastered by school leavers and cadets. Almost any reasonably intelligent adult can learn the rudiments of this craft in a fortnight, for a variety of good reasons journalism skills can be learned more expeditiously on the job than in the university: compared with the tertiary institutes, the media have better access to ever changing and expensive technology; the newsroom has a greater variety of senior level mentors and a peer group who are constantly on the cutting edge of journalistic activities and from whom the neophyte can gain insight and feedback; the ‘real world’ provides an immediate and tangible payoff for mastering and confirming to institutional norms.

So what is the economic, professional and social value of taking three or four years to beat these skills into university students, your nation’s academic elites? Is it to entice them into the craft (by falsely convincing each and every one of your 1,000 journalism graduates each year that there is a journalism job awaiting them), to indoctrinate them into the mores and values of the news business, to teach them how to survive in an increasingly non-moral, bottom-line-orientated business that tends to eat its young? Is journalism education devoted, in part, to diffusing idealism, to teaching eager students how to get along by going along? If so, journalism education is a hollow and amoral business, one that scarcely deserves a place at the academic table.

If the purpose of a tertiary education, even one that emphasizes journalism professionalism, is to be something more than perpetuating the status quo, what is it to be? And what are the ramifications? What is the nature of this perplexing quest for relevance and respect?

The questions I am raising here are not unique to Australia. They have been asked, but only partially answered, in North America and elsewhere. I’m not about to be a cultural imperialist, but since I have been invited to share some observations with you of a cross-cultural nature. I will do so. They are based not just on 30 years as a journalist and journalism academic in the US. They’re observations from one who 30 years ago, as a Rotary Foundation Fellow for International Understanding doing a second masters degree, sat in a year’s worth of lectures in journalism at the University of Queensland and the Brisbane Courier-Mail, who conducted a nationwide study on the training and education of Australia’s journalists in 1967, who returned in 1981 as a journalism faculty member at the South Australia College of Advanced Education (then Hartley College), and who at the time spearheaded a second national study on Australian journalism’s professionalism and education (the resultant book, under Murray Masterton’s byline, was titled But You’ll Never Be Bored.)

So I know that the histories of journalism education in my country and yours are not identical. I won’t insult you by suggesting that you’re inevitably travelling down the same road we have traveled in the US, and that from my vantage point I can predict with any certainty what obstacles you have to overcome and how your travels will end.

On the other hand, in my years of observing and participating in your quest for academic respectability and relevance I have had a tantalizing number of ‘deja vu’ experiences, tempting me to suggest that there may be a somewhat predictable pattern in your—and our—enterprises. So with your permission, and for whatever it’s worth, I’ll pass along to you a few observations about our mutual quest, and a suggestion that one path to solving our concerns over relevancy and respect lies in a clear-headed, systematic focus on ethics education for ourselves, our students, and the nation’s media practitioners.

Foundations of Journalism Education

When I first studied the Australian Press and the Education and training of her journalists, I was writing a term paper as a graduate student at Ohio University. It was 1965, and the cadetship program was coming under attack, by Henry Mayer and others. W. Sprague Holden, an American journalism educator who had spent a year here, strongly criticized the cadetship program for its anti-intellectual training of young journalists, and suggested in his book 40 years ago that shorthand is not more important than survival. At the time, there were no tertiary-level programs in journalism except for the Queensland University and RMIT diploma tracks, and those were of decidedly mixed quality, as I observed first hand in 1967. In Brisbane I sat through many dull and irrelevant lectures on early British press history, on interviewing and story crafting, and heard lots of war stories told by academically uncredentialed senior jourmos who had knocked off work early for several drinks of supper before lecturing to me and my classmates. The students were hoping that earning the journalism diploma would assure them of a fast-track entry into the metropolitan press, but there is little evidence that their expectations were met. From what I saw, in the 60s at least, a bright school leaver on a cadetship fared better in the workplace than a university grad, in part because the school leaver was more readily ‘trained’ and was both more subservient and cheaper to hire. The Lucky Country was in a bit of an anti-intellectual mood.

Frankly, a very similar pattern had occurred in the United States. On the job training was cheap and efficient. Journalism in the early years of the 20th century was a craft that appealed to the ambitious, who were very likely to
be coming from the lower middle classes. Too much formal education was detrimental to getting hired, and largely irrelevant to getting promoted.

However, whereas the Australian Journalists’ Association decided that a cadetship program would provide a wide if not necessarily deep talent pool for newsrooms, several press associations in the midwestern United States decided in the early 1900s that a path to improved (or at least ‘sustained’) journalism lay in establishing journalism schools in the local state-supported universities. Missouri, Illinois, Minnesota, Indiana, Iowa, Ohio, Kansas, Nebraska—states not best known for their academic excellence, but states well known for academic pragmatism—housed the first, and still the major, journalism schools. Press associations worked hand in glove with university personnel, helping design curricula that would meet the newspapers’ needs for fresh blood while, not coincidentally, maintaining good public relations with the influential universities.

To the press associations, good spelling and good grammar and good story organization skills were more important than abstract knowledge. To this day, whenever state editors and journalism educators sit around a conference table, the first topic of discussion is most likely to be the deplorable decline in graduates’ language skills. The press associations have always paid lip service to the need for journalism graduates to have learned media law (given the high cost of defending libel suits, it stands to reason there is value in this course); they also like their students to have learned a bit about journalism history; of late, they say it’s a good idea for journalism students to take a course in ethics. Meanwhile, in part as a demonstration of its independence from the pragmatic press associations, the national educational organization that accredits journalism programs has continued to insist that journalism students take not more than one fourth of all their coursework in applied journalism, and three fourths in other areas, particularly the liberal arts. This means that the typical journalism school graduate has been exposed to as many liberal arts subjects as an arts graduate. Most have a double major, typically in English, foreign languages, political science, sociology, history, or an interdisciplinary major in liberal arts plus economics, business, computer science, or the like.

The US system of journalism education has had its ups and downs. After decades of questing for relevance, the journalism schools have generally been accepted as the logical sources of new talent, the journalism gene pool. As the century ends, nearly seven out of eight new hires in journalism are j-school grads. Grad, especially those who have worked on their university newspapers and who have had at least one internship, are in a pretty good market. (They don’t earn a lot of money at first—indeed, journalism grads are among the lowest salaried graduates, a topic of never-ending discussion between editors and educators.) University graduates—increasingly, journalism graduates—are in the clear majority in newsroom management. The grads who are writing their own tickets have gone back to school for a masters degree that combines business management and journalism.

Press associations and editors who snipe at j-schools for not teaching spelling have come to admit that journalism grads are, in general, both trained and educated to make immediate and long term contributions to the field. I found as a journalism administrator that those editors most fixated on spelling were especially interested in recruiting our most marginal students, whom they could pay as little as necessary and could count on to stick around for a few years rather than use those first jobs as starting blocks for fast-track career building. After all, why should a small news operation with a limited budget invest too much time and energy improving the skills of young journalists who had no intention of sticking around?

There remain, of course, the elite news media (some truly elite, others elite only in their own minds); they have a somewhat different attitude toward j-schools. They want university graduates who have mastered almost any academic specialty other than journalism; they want writers who know as much as their sources do about political theory, or business, or urban planning, or science, or religion, or medicine, or fine arts. A masters degree, or even a doctorate, plus a half dozen years of prize-winning work in the trenches at smaller news outlets will open doors that seem to be forever shut to j-school grads with their everyday, vanilla, middle class and mid-western journalism degrees.

The golden mean, I’ve started to suspect after years of fighting the snobbery, is to recruit really bright students into the masters degree programs in journalism, students who have degrees in something other than journalism, students whose journalism degrees and work experiences make them good candidates for grad school, and give them the most challenging and relevant education we can, get them some good clips and channel their enthusiasm, expose them to staffers and editors from the elite media, and send them on their way. The really bright and mature students take to the blend of pragmatic and intellectual studies we offer, and they in turn give us much more than we give them.

Over the years, as I considered the troubling nature of the task at hand—of educating and nurturing the talents of young journalism hopefuls—I continually have been bothered by the conflicting pressures from pragmatic, short-sighted recruiters and equally pragmatic, myopic students on the one hand, and the more philosophical, abstract and other-worldly university community on the other. Deans and other administrators seek student enrolments and notches in their gunbelts when students win journalism awards and find jobs, but tenure and promotion committees and the university community as a whole are far more interested in the examined life (though one suspects tenure and promotion committees operate on the assumption that the more esoteric and less read a faculty member’s research, the more important it must be—a supposition that certainly flies in the face of the journalism professoriate’s
As one who has always been conflicted between the pragmatic and the philosophical I have sought to make connections between and among the myriad diverse forces in the journalism and mass communications education endeavour. Things have started to make a lot more sense to me since I have been concentrating my efforts on applied ethics. I have always been intrigued with the nature of journalistic decision-making, the quest for professionalism, the state of media accountability, and the relationships between press and society and press and centers of power. But, until about a dozen years ago, these issues were amorphous, and thinking and writing about them seemed to be relevant only to me and my tenure and promotion committees. Since the early 1980s, however, the lens through which I’ve been investigating these issues has been a much more clear one, and one that I’m willing to advocate for other journalism educators in turmoil over their enterprise’s relevance and respectability.

First, the quest for relevance

Applied ethics may be a model for making the educational enterprise relevant. That is true, in part, because the study of ethics involves asking and answering important questions about values, about principles, about obligations—to whom do we owe something; who can hold us accountable for our behaviours; what are the consequences of our beliefs and our actions; what attitudes or virtues should be employed by good people attempting to do good and do well?

The study and practice of ethics certainly connects with the core of university studies and provides an attitudinal framework for producing excellent craftsmanship. It deals with the most essential factors in a student’s and professional’s moral and intellectual development. It helps students move toward becoming autonomous moral decision makers who, simultaneously, appreciate their interconnectedness to other individuals and to society as a whole. Power—its nature and distribution—is always questioned, and never deferred to blindly. Stewardship and accountability are taught; values are caught. Open-mindedness and empathy are reinforced. What could be more relevant?

Ethics also entails the capacity to accept the universe as it is or to protest against it. A student of ethics will constantly ask and seek to answer fundamental questions about the dangers and rewards of challenging the system, of accountability, of autonomous decision-making in a world that values conformity. We’re talking here about the mindset of the student, but to answer these questions we also have to come to grips with the mindset of the professoriate—our own mindset. More on this in a moment.

Finally, ethics demands competency. The link between professional competence and professional ethics is not discussed as often as it should be. But it is obvious that the neophyte struggling with fundamental craft skills (how do I contact a source, how do I conduct an interview, how do I take notes, how do I organize my story, how do I spell, etc.) is not about to display excellent craftsmanship. In turn, the marginally competent journalist is unlikely to be focused on the more abstract but significant questions of truth-telling, justice, loyalty, beneficience, non-maleficence, virtue, and so forth. Like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, a hierarchy of ethics would seem to put fundamental professional and craft skills at the base, and abstractions at the self-actualized pinnacle. Yet, the ethical abstractions are necessary to master if journalism is to emerge from the pits of credibility where it is presently mired—near and mine—and if journalists and the public are to appreciate the fundamentally crucial role good journalism plays in open, democratic societies.

Let us inquire for a moment into the nature and value systems of the journalism professoriate, for the values we display are the values that are absorbed by our students. Are we, by and large, uncritical products of the journalism establishment, subconsciously or even consciously charged with the mandate of perpetuating the status quo? Or are we—for a variety of reasons—journalism critics (in the best sense of the word), independent academics on a quest to change a journalism system which we may have abandoned—or, at least, transcended as we moved into the cloistered life of the academy? What are the ramifications of falling into either of the above two mindsets? On one hand, what is the cost to our academic integrity when we do all we can to mold our students into interchangeable cogs in the news industry’s machinery? On the contrary, what does it mean when we do all we can to mold our students into the same sorts of independent minded professionals we have come to be in our new university homes? In the first place, we may be cranking out employable but insignificant graduates, and, in the second, we may be molding unemployable but disaffected critics. Either attitude comes at some expense to us, to our students, to journalism, and to society.

Please excuse the polarization. It is a rhetorical device, intended to demonstrate some concerns about what seems to be happening at either pole. Obviously we’re (individually and collectively) usually somewhere on a continuum. But if we can consider the ramifications of ‘craft-tending’ at one end or ‘ academy-tending’ at the other, we can advance the discussion.

One more observation about relevancy. If the study and practice ethics are longitudinal enterprises, ethics tells us and our students (and their potential employers) that we’re all in it for the long haul, not for the short term benefits. It is immoral for us to concentrate on training our students to ‘hit the road running,’ to be fully prepared for only their first jobs following graduation. In this incredible time of constantly changing work forces, in which the typical graduate of today can anticipate having not just one but several distinct careers, we must help students
prepare for a lifetime of learning. This may tell you I’m not the slightest concerned about the fact that you may be graduating three times as many students as there are available slots in Australia’s news media. A good broad journalism education remains one of a university’s best life-enhancing bargains. Again, open-mindedness and flexibility must be valued, despite all the short-term forces to the contrary. Our students will be working in careers not yet imagined, employing skills and technology not yet invented. All we know is that the good ones will be productive journalists and productive communicators; they will generate and dispense knowledge; they will help society make sense out of babel. To prepare them for that is a challenge, but one we must face.

Second, the quest for respect

Another thing ethics teaches us is the important distinction between image and substance, between character and reputation. Thus, as journalism education seeks respect, we are reminded that what we are, what we stand for and what we won’t stand for, is far more significant than whether we’re scoring particularly well on a popularity poll. And, as we worry about our own respect, we’re equally troubled about the lack of respect society affords our graduates and media practitioners in general. American journalism right now is at an all-time low in credibility polls, which makes it a perfect time to concentrate on ethics if only because many journalists think that if the public thinks the journalists have started writing codes of ethics and worrying about ethics, the public may start liking them. My own take on the topic is that if journalists start studying ethics, they may actually become more ethical; increased credibility could be a coincidental byproduct, but it is not the primary product being sought. The same argument can be—and has been—made at JEA.

What about respect for journalism education? At all but a small handful of universities, journalism schools by and large are fairly far down the collegiate pecking order (even media studies, with all their rhetorical but oft uninformed criticisms of journalism and popular culture, are better situated in the university barnyard than we). I’ve spent three of the past four years housed with philosophers in an ethics center, and can safely report that the gap between the self-defined academic sophisticates and the unwashed j-school faculty may be impossible to bridge. In these circumstances, it takes a good deal of personal and professional self-awareness and self-confidence to overcome the natural tendencies to need to be loved by our colleagues. Naturally, the same battles for ego and status affect our students.

In our search for respect, we turn our attention toward professionalism. We want our students to behave professionally, to work in a profession, to be respected as legitimate professionals. We stretch the definitions of professionalism so journalism somehow fits, so it deserves the mantle. We argue that, like other professions, our students and the best practitioners they seek to emulate and join 1) have a body of systematic theory; 2) have esoteric but useful knowledge skills; 3) have a set of enduring norms and expectations; 4) have enormous commitment and powers and privileges controlled by community sanctions; 8) are also governed by enforceable codes of ethics. Above all, as we learn from the occupational sociologists, we want our graduates to embody the key variable of professionalism: a spirit of stewardship.

Whether journalism is, can ever be, or even should strive to be a profession is subject to considerable debate. That debate is greatly enhanced when carried out in the language of ethics, of ‘wes,’ ‘oughts,’ and ‘obligations,’ of ‘promises’ and ‘power,’ of ‘accountability.’ Journalism faculties and journalism students would do well to wage such debates at length, and not only in faculty meetings and in the classroom. Such debates should be carried out within the industry and brought to the attention of the general public, so the nation’s journalists and all of us are continually reminded that competent and ethical journalism is essential to an informed and self-governing society. Along the way, the issues of relevance and respect for journalism education will also be addressed, and perhaps resolved.

The argument by Richard Kaplan and Patrick Maines, in The Government Factor, a 1995 book published by the Cato Institute in Washington, DC, is instructive:

‘If there seems to be a tension between ethics and journalism, if the application of ethics to journalism seems uncertain or inadequate or even irrelevant, it is because ethics and journalism are, in some key respects, strange bedfellows. Ethics is the branch of philosophy concerned with moral decision-making. What puts it at odds with journalism is not that ethics deals with moral questions, but that it is a branch of philosophy.

‘Philosophy is a discipline that operates in the realm of the theoretical; journalism operates in the precinct houses of the real world. Good philosophers have a capacity for abstract thinking; among journalists the ability to think and express thoughts in concrete terms is prized. Philosophical discussions tend to be open ended in scope and ongoing in duration; the great questions about the nature of being and meaning of existence remain open to discussion thousands of years after Aristotle and Socrates. Journalism, in contrast, seeks to present information with a sense of finality while meeting deadlines that are clearly finite in nature. ‘And that’s the way it is...’ as Walter Cronkite would assure us each night. Philosophy is a contemplative activity while journalism is action oriented...
'At the risk of overgeneralizing, it would not be stretching too far to say that philosophers have preferred to think of themselves as thoughtful and erudite compared to journalists, whom they perceive to be unfocused if not downright ignorant and in any event barely removed from the unwashed masses. Journalists, on the other hand, think of themselves as quick-witted pragmatists; they take pride in turning out a useful product under difficult conditions, and think of philosophers as idle dreamers whose practical contributions to society are highly questionable.'

2 William Woo, former editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, was quoted in Editor & Publisher, Sept. 21, 1996, p. 44.

'I believe the end of journalism is to serve people in the most profound way possible, which is to give them reliable information and facts and opinions, arrived at by hard, backbreaking, intellectual labor and formed by judgement and guided, always, by integrity, so that men and women may be assisted in making the decisions that determine the outcome of their personal and civic and commercial and political lives... We are journalists for only a time, but we are human beings forever. Moreover, the very things that make one a superior human being are necessary to being a superior journalist. It is not the other way around. The moral cowards and the intellectually slothful do not succeed in business.'

Dr Jay Black is the Poynter-Jamison Chair in Media Ethics at the University of South Florida. He is the author of eight books and monographs, over 40 journal articles on topics ranging from media ethics, public journalism and communication studies. His book Doing Ethics in Journalism, which he authored with colleagues Ralph Barney and Bob Steele, is a seminal work in the media ethics field. Professor Black is a founding editor of the Journal of Mass Media Ethics and a leading scholar in journalism ethics, who is in demand as a consultant by news organizations throughout North America. In 1997 he was awarded the Freedom Forum's $10,000 journalism educator of the year award, presented at the Association for Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication's annual conference in Chicago. Jay Black has worked as a reporter and copy editor on four daily newspapers prior to becoming a journalism educator. His association with Australia began in 1967 when he completed his MA at the University of Queensland, sponsored by Rotary Foundation Fellowship for International Understanding. In 1981 he exchanged teaching positions with former JEA member Don Woolford at the Hartley College of Advanced Education in Adelaide (now University of South Australia). In November and December 1997 Jay Black was Visiting Professor in the School of Media and Journalism at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane.
Does Journalism Have A Future?

Dr Delbert Schafer

There's more to journalism and a journalistic career than the mass media of television, radio and capital city daily newspapers.

There's more to journalism than publishing or broadcasting the same stories, but with a slightly different angle, that every other outlet produces.

There's more to journalism than entertaining the mass reader, viewer or listener in a financial bottom line frenzy in imitation of News Corp's Rupert Murdoch's down-market strategy.

Human tragedy makes for exciting copy, and when there's photographs, film and video to startle, shock, or horrify the mass media may think they have achieved Nirvana. Yet, should the media practice "Me Tooism?" and replicate what their competitor publishes or broadcasts?

Not only should each competitor within each medium seek to differentiate its editorial coverage, but media sectors should play to their strength.

Radio wins on immediacy, Television wins on visual, Print wins on explanation and analysis, and the Internet has now entered the fray to contest all three traditional sources.

My statements do not intend to start a war among media content providers, but to remind journalists that career options exist outside mainstream media. As a representative from the print side of journalism, I'll confine my further comments to the users of trees to disseminate their products.

Just as a measure of numbers, journalists who work for the major newspapers constitute a minority of the profession. While regarded in past years as the pinnacle of success, do our daily press colleagues perform greatly more valuable news and information service than do those of us who labour in the vineyards of niche newspapers, community newspapers, magazines and specialty newsletters?

In this age, we must think globally, but we must act locally - to steal a phrase.

Readers want and demand news and information that they can tailor to their specific interests and needs.

Stories about Princess Diana’s death and the Thredbo mudslide disaster occupy us for hours or even days, but then we move on and re-focus our attention to on-going occupations and pre-occupations.

Journalists must develop expertise in reporting on and writing about human tragedies and concerns. They must develop the skills to select and present the stories that possess meaning and impact for significant sub-sections of society.

Journalists must put their brains into gear when reporting and writing - if not, then Internet push technology may swamp the profession and users will be left to their own devices to sort through the mass of raw undigested garbage that providers will put through onto the Internet.

Journalism and journalists have a future. And it lies with those who learn and practice the basics of interviewing, reporting and writing.

Australian journalism should stake its future on developing news reporters instead of advertorial, infotainment copy writers. One's salary may not rival that of Paddy McGuinness, and certainly not that of Ray Martin, Alan Jones or Jana Wendt. But a career as a quality news reporter can provide a living wage and a profound sense of accomplishment as you help Australians gain information and news vital to their well being.

There's a career path for quality news-reporting, subject expert journalists who work in niche media outlets. In truth, journalists careers may move forward faster and further by working in niche publications, even when the objective is to work with a mainstream publisher. Entry-level jobs at niche publications increasingly have taken over the role of cadetships at the major publications.

Journalists and journalism cannot afford to fixate on the stars of mass media outlets. To do so performs a disservice to our profession, readers, listeners and viewers.

Dr Delbert Schafer is the editor of Business Sydney. He arrived in Sydney in 1997 after a long career in business journalism on the US west coast. Delbert was editor of The Business Journal in California's famous Silicone Valley, San Jose, from 1992 to 1994. He spent 20 years as editor and reporter on the Kansas City Business Journal. Delbert has been associated with various academic institutions in the US.
How will Australia’s papers approach the news in the New Millennium?

Kerry Green

Introduction
This paper is based on the results of a survey of Queensland and New South Wales newspaper gatekeepers, conducted this year, and on the author’s industry experience. It hypothesises that although journalists typically are portrayed as small “I” liberals (Henningham, 1996, 207-209), as souls with healthy streaks of both individualism and cynicism, and who view the status quo with gimlet-eyed suspicion, the reality in Australia is often the opposite: that journalists are politically conservative, prone to follow the leader rather than take individual action, and afraid to break away from the status quo.

This study of gatekeepers will look at specific aspects of gatekeepers’ conservatism and relate it to the news choices they make – specifically the news choices they make about celebrities like Diana, Princess of Wales.

Method
This survey is part of a larger study which looks at the use of readership research in Australian newsrooms. The survey referred to here consisted of phone interviews with 110 senior journalists in Queensland and New South Wales.

Those interviewed were senior members of their newsrooms (73 in Queensland and 37 in New South Wales). They ranged from managing editors to editorial department heads (features departments, sports departments, chief subs) and all played gatekeeping roles in their organisations. The survey instrument was a 105-variable questionnaire delivered by phone in September and November. Respondents represent metropolitan, suburban and provincial newspapers. The resulting data set was inspected using the SAS statistics package, employing the Frequency and General Linear Model (ANOVA) procedures.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. Sections C (Gatekeeping) and E (Demographics) are the areas that interest us here.

In Section C, the respondents were asked to rate the importance of six factors in deciding on the newsworthiness of a potential story. Respondents were asked to respond on a semantic scale of one to four, where a response of 1 indicated “not important” and 4 indicated “very important”. The six factors respondents were asked to rate, separately, were: Journalistic experience, readership research, colleagues’ opinions, feedback from readers, feedback from other sections of the paper, and what the opposition, both print and broadcast, were doing.

Respondents also were asked to rank-order six groups of people in response to the question “Who knows best what should be included on the news agenda?” The groups, in alphabetical order, were: The audience, audience researchers the government, journalists, other authority figures, the public in general (includes non-readers as well as readers).

Additionally, respondents were asked about their attitudes towards a newspaper’s function with regard to the news agenda – should a newspaper set the agenda or should it follow it? The contention here is that a preponderance of responses in favour of setting the agenda would indicate an independence of spirit on the part of the gatekeepers, while a preponderance of responses in favour of following the agenda would indicate a lack of independence.

Section E dealt with standard demographic variables.

Results
Frequency tables revealed that of the journalists surveyed, almost exactly a quarter (26 per cent) were female. The largest group of journalists (40.3 per cent) was in the 36-45 years age group, with about another 20 per cent each in the 26-35 years and the 46-55 years age groups. Nearly 7 per cent were between 18 and 25 years of age, 12.5 per cent were in the 56-65 year bracket. None were over 65.

A group comprising 34.7 per cent of the survey listed secondary school leaving as their highest education level, matching a group of 33.3 per cent who listed a bachelor degree as their highest education level. Just fewer than 10 per cent (9.7 per cent) listed Year 10, 15.3 per cent listed a part-degree and 6.9 per cent said they had a certificate or diploma.

The group had an almost entirely Christian background (32.4 per cent Roman Catholic, 29.6 per cent Anglican and 31 per cent Other Protestant) and more than a third said they still practised their religion (34.3 per cent).

Close to half came from families which had a professional background (44.9 per cent), 10 per cent from Clerical or Sales, 26 per cent from Skilled Trade, nearly 9 per cent from semi-skilled or unskilled and 10 per cent from Agriculture.

Voting intentions were: National Party 6.9 per cent, Labor 22.2, Liberal 15.3, Democrats 1.4, Other 13.9, Don’t Know 25, and Refused 15.3.

Political leanings were: Pretty much to the left 4.2 per cent, A little to the left 16.7, Middle of the road 34.7,
How will Australia’s papers approach the news in the New Millennium?

Discussion

Shortly after the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, I wrote in an op-ed article in *The Australian* (2 Sep 1997, 15) that the readers of tabloid salaciousness had to accept some responsibility for the tabloids’ obsession with sensation as a news value and for the intrusion of the paparazzi into the private lives of celebrities. Part of the argument put forward in that article expounded the belief that the mass media were encouraged to produce sensational stories because of the reading public’s continuing acceptance of them – and that if the reading public did not like the media’s pursuit of public figures like Diana, it had to get that message across to the media by shunning those publications and those stories. I said then:

"... if readers and viewers had shown a less voracious appetite for "stories" about Diana, the mass media would not have felt compelled to compete so tenaciously.

If audiences themselves had shown less interest in Diana, the paparazzi would have had less incentive to pursue her so relentlessly."

But the public’s role in the pursuit of sensation is only part of the story – journalists, too, must take responsibility because they, after all, are the people who produce the publications. But this research supports other qualitative studies and anecdotal evidence that journalists eschew responsibility for sensational publications with a dismissive “We only give ‘em what they want” response. While this study’s survey responses indicate that Queensland and New South Wales journalists adhere to that dictum, they also indicate something else – that such a journalistic attitude might be borne not out of a wish to satisfy public demand for sensation, but ironically out of a formulaic and conservative approach to news choices.

The figures which bear out this conservatism are those which reveal journalists’ attitudes towards the news agenda, specifically their responses to questions about agenda-setting. Only a quarter of those surveyed (25 per cent) thought newspapers should set the agenda. A similar number (26.4 percent) thought newspapers should follow the agenda, while the remainder (47.2 per cent), when pressed for a response, thought a newspaper’s function was a combination of both setting and following, although respondents in this group clearly felt uneasy with the idea of leading opinion and stated they leaned towards the “follow” end of the scale. These figures illustrate a curious tendency to surrender journalistic independence to the audience – a tendency at odds with the popular perception of the journalist as a free-thinking, free-spirited individual.

Is this predilection towards following the news agenda – that is, giving readers more of what they say they want – simply borne out of sound marketing experience, or is it driven by something else? My contention is that while marketing experience is involved, the survey figures also indicate a herd mentality – a fear of making a mistake – also is involved. Such an attitude would go some way towards explaining the Diana obsession exhibited by the tabloids and popular women’s magazines.

That obsession was demonstrated by an informal survey in the first and second quarters of 1996 which showed that three of the nation’s women’s magazines always had either pictures or words of Diana on the front cover – at times when her actions were less than eminently newsworthy. There will be times, naturally, when the activities of prominent people will be interesting to the mass audience, but there are also times when their activities will be intensely dull and boring. A media industry uncertain of its news choices at such times appears to follow a “me-too” approach, in which any departure from the usual is seen as having the potential for disaster. At such times, tried and true recipes requiring a liberal application of the Mixmaster appear to be favoured – and references to Diana meet that criterion. That goes some way towards explaining the appearance of Diana on the front cover of this month’s Woman’s Weekly in a tired re-run of a story about Sophie Rhys-Jones.

This formulaic, safety-first approach to news choice is at least partly explained by the conservatism displayed by the Queensland-New South Wales survey. The survey reveals a predominant conservatism throughout the group, exhibited most puzzlingly in the group’s responses to the question about political leanings. In Henningham’s wide-ranging national survey on the characteristics of Australian journalists, journalists were found to be generally slightly left of centre in their political leanings (Henningham, 208). But this survey shows them to be predominantly right of centre – the largest group (34.7 per cent) sees itself as being middle of the road, but 27.8 per cent count...
themselves slightly right of centre as against only 16.7 per cent slightly left of centre. And the majority come from middle-class professional or agricultural family backgrounds.

The conservatism is further illustrated by the ANOVA. Only a quarter of the respondents thought a paper should set the news agenda. The other three-quarters, who thought a paper should follow the news agenda in some form, placed higher value on the opinions of their colleagues' news choices than did the first group. In other words, they were more willing to follow the choices their colleagues made than were the smaller group.

Perhaps the most perplexing response of all, however, comes when the journalists place the audience's news judgment far above their own. When asked “Who knows best what should be on the news agenda”, journalists gave their audience the number one rating 47 per cent of the time. Journalists won the number one rating only 31.4 per cent of the time. When you add 47 per cent for the audience to 20.8 per cent for the general public (non-readers as well as readers), you have journalists conceding almost 70 per cent of the top rank to members of the public against 31 per cent for themselves. Such a response goes beyond false modesty and suggests a lack of confidence on the part of the nation's news media gatekeepers.

An interesting element of the survey occurs when education levels are taken into account. Journalists educated to Year 12 level place greater importance on the value of journalistic experience in news choice (26.39 per cent thought it was Very Important) than do those with higher levels of education (12.5 per cent degree, 11.11 per cent part-degree and 4.17 per cent certificate). While these journalists have more limited resources and must rely more heavily on journalistic experience, and hence would tend to value it more highly, the converse could also be true – that better-educated journalists, having greater resources, will value journalistic experience less highly and may make more individual choices.

Conclusions

This paper concludes that the journalists in this study – and by extension Australian journalists in general – are a more conservative group than has hitherto been portrayed. This conservatism is reflected in a reluctance to depart from formulaic news choices and results in a follow-the-leader style news agenda across newspapers, reducing the variety and extent of news stories available to readers today. One of its manifestations is a belief in references to Diana, Princess of Wales, as a touchstone for circulation safety. Other celebrities will no doubt be manufactured to take her place.

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Best Practice News Team Management

Marc Gonsalves

In this age of democracy, free thought and widely distributed opinion on almost everything, and particularly those things upon which you have plenty of opinion and not a commensurate amount of fact, it might come as something of a surprise, indeed even shock, to a young aspiring journalist that a newspaper is in fact not a democracy. Old-style editors are occasionally driven to remark that they do indeed run a democracy: one in which the staff is utterly free to do precisely what they are told to do!!

And what they should be told is that facts are sacred, and opinions easily come by. Opinion is valuable in a newspaper only if the writer expressing those opinions has some suitably eminent qualifications to support those opinions.

Otherwise, what we are faced with is, at best, popular rumour, prejudice and mental junk.

What better way to illustrate the latter point than news this morning of a prominent legal eagle, who has fallen prey to opinion, rumour and possible prejudice over a period of three years.

The person in question is a Mr John Marsden, who has just this morning been cleared, on this occasion after an extensive police investigation, of any allegations in relation to paedophilia.

The latest investigations were as a result of allegations made on Channel Seven's Witness program based on the opinions of others: witnesses who claimed they had been victims: Were they in fact courting rumour?? Perhaps courting prejudice?? At least that is one way of looking at the thing.

I open thus mainly to point out, what in my humble view, is the first principle of best practice, news team management: this is to ensure when establishing a news team the importance to establish control over it.

This is necessary, not because the person in charge of the team - the editor, news editor, chief of staff, or even perhaps the chief sub-editor - wants to control the news.

Far from it but it is critical that he or she who happens to be charged with the responsibility ensures that the news gathered, and reported, is accurate, balanced and most importantly reliable.

So when considering best practice, news team management, you need a team, and this is defined as a group of men and women who have a leader.

This leader can be either the editor, news editor, chief of staff, or even at a pinch, and in emergencies, the chief sub-editor.

Now, his or her task is not an easy one.

Journalists tend to be individuals. Leaders tend to be a bit headstrong. Somewhere in the mix, you must work towards having a meeting of minds and cooperation to produce the product of a quality and standard every member of the team is proud of, produce it on time, each day of the week, regularly through the year.

Somewhat I guess like Laxettes. The key word is regularity!

Once the latter is established, there must be empathy and response to the leader with every member of the team in possession of a high degree of intuition, intelligence and initiative.

Initiative and the ability to react and work not only as individuals, but to do so in the knowledge that they are part of a team.

Somewhat like the cogs in a clock's wheel which make its operation functional and precise.

Awareness is also another vital component effective news teams must strive to attain. It is not only an awareness of themselves and their weaknesses - know thine own enemy for it might be thyself! - but also an awareness of their surroundings and the significance and weight they place on people who make up the community.

After all it is the community at large which provides or helps create the news which is reported not only in print but also the electronic media.

Humility is also a necessary attribute which must be inculcated into news teams to achieve best practice. It is a vital attribute in anyone who is to be given the power of the press which often means the power of the last word in a situation.

This is one of the temptations to a news team: having the last word for themselves.

Diligence is yet another attribute members of a successful news team must have. If this is not evident at the start, then it is up to the leader to instil and nurture this vital quality in his or her team. You have got to have people who will go that extra mile to check a fact. For example: it is easy enough for someone to ring up and allege to a news team member that the mayor is living with the vicar's wife. Check it, perhaps the mayor and / or the vicar and his wife might have something to say about it. Worst still, so might their lawyers!!!

Courage is another key attribute news team members must possess. Journalists get a lot of pressure and this, perhaps oddly, tends to be greater in the suburban news area than in the daily scenario.

This is partly because most sububans depend on advertising, more heavily than their daily brethren, who have the added advantage of paid circulation.

This makes news teams on sububans more vulnerable. One of the greatest of Australia's newspapermen, Sir John Williams, CEO and Chairman of The Herald and Weekly Times group in its heyday, often used to say:
‘The strongest newspaper is the richest one!’ There is much truth in that.

Another great newspaper man, James Macartney who was Head of West Australian Newspapers in its great days of the ‘50s and ‘60s, kept framed over his desk a print of the front page of his own newspaper which carried a report of his very public and messy divorce.

When advertisers came demanding special treatment in relation to suppressing some embarrassing news, or seeking some advantage or other they thought their money entitled them to, Macartney would merely smile and point to the print above his desk.

Determination and dedication are also essential to best practice news team management.

The former attribute is a great quality to be cherished in a newspaper person. It is the determination to get the story, to get the facts, to keep on working when all others have gone home.

This then translates to dedication which is an equally important attribute. But in order to keep it you need to reward it.

This does not necessarily mean money. Status, appreciation, recognition can all be more powerful and more useful in rewarding someone for work well done.

Honesty and accuracy are qualities required by members of an effective news team and possessing such, goes without saying.

Now, that is the rough dozen qualities essential to best practice news team management. There are of course others. But those are the main ones.

I also think merit is the best criterion for choosing people to make up news teams. Some so-called modern thinkers believe that you should have an even balance of males and females, of ethnic groups and so forth.

To do that, in my view, you have to be unfair and discriminatory.

It probably won’t work and it will make the team hard to handle, for someone might believe they have a right to be there for reasons other than their abilities.

Overall though, leadership is the vital component. The leader of a news team must be fair, firm and all the things you find in a good football or cricket captain or coach. The qualities you want to see in the team members, must also be seen in the leader - in spades.

Also, and this is perhaps the most important point of all, the leader must aim at building a team, not a base for his or her ego!!!

This does not mean that ego is not a worthwhile quality in a leader. If it is within control it can be of great use. But his or her personality must be such that the ego is used for the benefit of the team - for the benefit of the newspaper - to demand the quality performance and dedication by leading from the front.

I suppose in the end the team must also have fun.

If all they expect of the day is a very hard slog with little recognition and constant criticism, and we have all had our fair share, they will not succeed.

And, if they do not come together as a cohesive unit; a team, then the newspaper will not succeed.

Morale must be maintained by fairness, responsiveness and dedication in the leader. Hard work must be recognised. Performance beyond the call of duty must be acknowledged.

But hard work must also be expected. It is the non-pecuniary rewards that make the difference.

In closing, life on a newspaper is not easy. It is a hard and demanding trade now under considerable challenge from the electronic media.

It needs talent. It needs human understanding.

Marc Gonsalves is Group Editor of Fairfax Community Newspapers.
Best practice news team management

Janice Withnall

I would like to briefly discuss how we at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean, teach and research this subject. Importantly, we build on professional experience and practice by further informing this through exposure to and application of theory, models and approaches. Our liaison with editorial managers such as Marc Gonsalves of Fairfax Community Newspapers helps to clearly illustrate the connection between practice and theory and industry and academe.

I feel it is necessary to teach in journalism and media programs certain concepts, models and theories from the field of management that are directly relevant to news operations and journalism. I believe this information can further inform journalists, their practice and experience and so improve their decision making, planning and outcomes. Selection of such content, depicting its relationship to news and journalism, and coordinating the manner in which it is delivered are of importance and I will outline these aspects in my presentation.

From a research perspective, it has come to my attention, and perhaps others, that over the last number of years change has occurred in how the media business is run. These changes have impacted on news reportage and journalism. We can all give examples of ownership changes, change of editorial management teams and approaches, and the emergence of dominant business areas such as: marketing/advertising/circulation; human resources; finance/ accounting; and production/operation; within news organisations.

It is said that editorial departments and news teams are unique in the world of management. The acknowledged difference appears to be generated by the role of news teams in contrast to the role of an accounts department in a media organisation. However, certain management concepts and techniques appear to be applicable to news teams. In Australia selected management approaches began to be implemented in the early 1980s.

I wish to continue to study what affect these approaches have on news and journalism, to record what the changes are, how they happened and why they happened. In a way, this is an invitation for all interested journalists, journalism educators and researchers to gather case studies so we can move towards a better understanding of the management affect on news outcomes and journalism's evolution.

I also believe understanding this occurrence helps journalists and editorial managers develop a more effective working relationship with functional managers, general managers, managing directors, chief executive officers, publishers, etc. Through this understanding and improved relationship they can protect the news hole, work to expand the news hole, support their people and their budget.

Fashions, Favourites and Foundations

I approach the teaching of this subject from a case study, problem solving perspective. I cover the content in three sections, Fashions, Favourites and Foundations. From a student learning perspective it is important to note that often the strongly held belief systems of journalists and would-be journalists clash with certain value systems that underly traditional concepts of best practice, team work and management. This difference must be acknowledged and explored to ensure a positive learning outcome.

The philosophical debates that can arise from this clash involve such matters as, commercialisation of news; yellow journalism; loyalty to an organisation who pays your salary; doing hours versus getting the story; meeting professional and creative standards of journalism; and management as the enemy/opposition. The debates are a useful learning experience and represent the reality of journalism practice today with its tension of coexistence.

These debates also lead to discussion of why deeper knowledge of management is important to journalism and journalists and therefore the underlying reason for pursuing this subject. The context of journalism as a boundary spanning, transdisciplinary practice is introduced or reintroduced. We compare learning about management to learning about other fields such as human communication, politics, economics and the legal system. For most journalism students the relevance of learning about management then becomes even more apparent and is taken up with interest.

Throughout the subject we use examples, case studies, to help relate management ideas to the work of a journalist, sub-editor and editor. Practising journalists and editorial managers give guest presentations to further strengthen the learning experience. Importantly functional managers also present to the group. It is worthwhile to hear about their frustration, difficulty and delight when working with a news department. Overall the blend of content, content delivery and assessment mechanisms results in students who are aware of, and understand management concepts and in many cases can interpret, analyse and critique management concepts in relation to news and journalism.

Returning to Fashions, Favourites and Foundations. Best Practice is introduced as a Fashion and Team Work as a Favourite. Best practice is discussed from a number of viewpoints:

- the attributes/standards of excellence
- what works best for productivity, profitability and people
- a checklist approach to benchmarking a product, service, organisation
a list for performance measurement - exceptional performance
a reference of generic best solutions to problems.

We discuss other recent management fads and consider if they are relevant and achievable. We introduce team work as a Favourite and present a short history of the team phenomena. We then discuss the idea using the characteristics below. Discussion of these ideas and their application in a news department often results in strong discussion that revolves around belief systems and values:

- Motivation, satisfaction
- Responsibility and authority
- Problem solving, decision making
- Conflict, cooperation, consensus
- Leadership, supervision, management
- Planning, implementation, evaluation
- Multi skilling, cross functional work teams.

Foundations

The Foundations section of the subject covers management theory, types of specialist management and operational or functional management. Again this content stimulates strong discussion as we explore the meaning of management; the manner of directing or controlling a business, organisation or institution’s external and internal environment AND managing; bringing about, accomplishing, by taking charge and care of …. The discussion is helpful as a way of dissecting the ‘news is a business’ argument and the ‘MBA isation of the news room’ notion. It also highlights the connection between managing and team work and what this means for journalists, editorial managers and editorial departments.

In management theory we consider both the classical and humanistic approaches. We spend time talking through examples of such theories in practice. We focus, where possible, on the students’ work experience or internship situations to explore the reality of the models.

We consider the different specialist types of management in a brief, perhaps fleeting way, and discuss their relevance to news teams and editorial management:

- Crisis management
- Risk management
- Issues management
- Incentive management
- Information management
- Integrated resource management
- Strategic management.

Our third content area in Foundations is functional management. We look at the working relationships of journalists and editorial managers with workers and managers of other functional or operational areas. We make sure we discuss examples from small to large scale enterprises and that students are aware that we are barely touching the surface for each functional area:

- Human Resources - recruitment, displacement, performance review
- Finance - benchmarking, auditing, investor relations
- Operations - Management by Objective, Just in Time, Total Quality Management
- Marketing - SWOT, Mix and Process - 4ps
- Information Systems - information mapping
- Research and Development - technology, entrepreneurship
- Legal - corporate law.

In our postgraduate program we offer intensive courses that consider meta context notions such as corporate governance and transborder issues. We find students who have enjoyed the Foundation content mentioned above take on these more advanced courses.

As a closing point, throughout this subject there is a need to clarify the differences, similarities and the connections between media industry management and news team management. Media industry management often incorporates a news, information, entertainment and advertising mix of products, over many mediums, within a commercial or public sector context. It is often confused with news team management and its focus on news reportage within a business or organisational context. The defining term or boundary that assists with this clarification is journalism. Journalism helps to ensure an understanding of news team management.
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Janice Withnall is a Journalism Lecturer and Coordinator and member of the Professional Communication Research Group at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. Her journalism research spans environment reporting, news team management, online journalism and continuing professional development for journalists and media workers.
Your ABC - but for how long?  

Errol Hodge

Putting it politely, Federal Communication Minister Richard Alston tends to be loose with the truth. In its policy on broadcasting released before the 1996 election, the coalition promised to “maintain existing levels of commonwealth funding to the ABC”. That was about $520 million dollars a year. The promise lasted even up to election night, when Alston was interviewed by the ABC’s political correspondent, Jim Middleton.

**Middleton:** The commitment to maintain funding in real terms over the term of the coming parliament. Does that stand?

**Alston:** Absolutely!

**Middleton:** Even if you discover on Monday the Budget’s bottom line is much worse than the Government’s been saying?

**Alston:** O yes. I think John Howard’s made it very plain that we want to maintain - honour - all our commitments and the ABC is a very important part of that. (ABC transcript, 1996)

In 1998, the budget will again be at least $55 million less. There’s even a rumour that the government could cut the budget by another $50 million, though it’s hard to imagine an unpopular government facing the polls in a year or so again infuriating ABC viewers and listeners like this.

But how is the ABC going to cope with a continued cut of even $55 million? The ABC’s resident whistle-blower, John Millard, almost lost his job for exposing backdoor sponsorship at the ABC two years ago in programs about health, holidays and science.

Now he’s spoken up again. He says:

“The ABC’s response to Government funding cuts is more and more like the slippery slope to a commercial ABC.

Faced with funding cuts, ABC management has chosen to cut back on integrity and independence, rather than cutting back program output.”

In recent months Media Watch has exposed, among other things, the recent practice, in ABC outsourced programs like *A River Somewhere* and *Good News Week*, of ‘placing’ and naming commercial products and organisations in the program and/or its credits. (Millard 1997)

I didn’t count the number of times ‘trusty Vespa motor scooters’ were mentioned in the endless shots of Rob Sitch and his mate riding up and down the mountains of Italy in search of trout streams, but I’d be interested to see the sales figures for Vespa in Australia after the series was screened.

Millard writes that “outsource producers can now outbid the ABC producers and offer the ABC cheaper programs by subsidising their production costs with a little commercial contra-dealing; that is, dollars paid in return for advertorial program content.

Can we soon expect to see on the ABC a string of new outsourced programs based on the lucrative and frequently exploited (in commercial media) advertorial subjects of the motor car, health, high technology, food and travel?

The ABC’s first batch of outsourced programs appeared to be littered with commercial company credits, product placement, endorsements and the like. (Millard 1997)

Millard says, “The ABC managers, the ABC Board and even Senator Alston might consider crossing Harris Street to the Centre of Independent Journalism and submitting their outsourcing thesis for a mark!”

Don’t wait up for a return of The Investigators - critical consumer affairs programs don’t provide quite the same advertorial opportunities.

Students at the Uni of Technology’s Australian Centre of Independent Journalism have completed an assignment about the ABC funding cutbacks and the consequent outsourcing of the ABC’s program production. They are understandably giving particular attention to the impact of outsourcing on the ABC’s editorial independence.

Across the road at ABC headquarters, Managing Director Brian Johns, the ABC board and its chairman, Donald MacDonald, have completed exactly the same assignment on ABC cutbacks, set by their examiner in Canberra, Senator Alston. Curiously, their conclusions are a little different from those of the students of Journalism - quite the opposite perhaps.

Nonetheless, the ABC managers have delighted Canberra, if not the Australian public, with their most practical conclusion that "the ABC can remain completely independent whilst allowing outside commercial and government lobby groups to fund ABC information and documentary programs." (Millard 1997)

One of the students who was researching the subjects was asked by an apparatchik of the ABC’s Corporate Division, “Why would you want to be investigating outsourcing!?” (Millard 1997)

When attempts were made to expose outsourcing corruption two years ago, the ABC managers replied: “It can’t happen ... Look, the guidelines say it is not permitted.” (Millard 1997)

Former ABC Board member Quentin Dempster said recently in *The Sydney Morning Herald* that ABC science programs were now considering co-production proposals on health which might be funded by drug companies.
He added, “And news and current affairs management is pushing the ABC board to amend our editorial guidelines to allow co-productions with commercial broadcasters for weekly current affairs programs such as *Four Corners* and *Foreign Correspondent*. Outsourcing and the search for co-production funding both put at risk the ABC’s independence and integrity. That independence and integrity were most recently compromised in two ABC bungles. There was the backdoor sponsorship affair through the info-entertainment programs such as *Everybody* and *The Home Show*. An inquiry found there were irreconcilable differences between the ABC’s co-production guidelines and the expectations of external investors who funded those productions.” (Dempster 1997)

The national spokesperson for Friends of the ABC, Dr June Factor, says, “The long-term future of the ABC is not best defended by turning *Four Corners* into *Witness*, *Foreign Correspondent* into a pleasant travelogue with ‘accidental’ shots of particular airlines and alcoholic beverages.” (Factor 1997)

Several prominent ABC identities have signed a letter to the ABC Board expressing their concern about plans to let weekly current affairs shows make programs jointly with commercial broadcasters.

The signatories include the ‘usual suspects’ like Phillip Adams, but also some others not usually identified as radicals: Richard Glover, Carolyn Jones, Norman Swan and Robin Williams. Figures showing the effects of the budget cuts on the ABC so far present a bleak picture:

### Cuts to ABC programs in 1996/97 (to meet a $10.8 million reduction)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One prime-time radio shift in each capital city</td>
<td>(Jennie Brockie 2BL, Doug Alton 3LO, Peter Dick 4QR, etc.)</td>
<td>GONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC local radio after 7 p.m. weeknights (now networked from Sydney)</td>
<td></td>
<td>GONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio arts programs</td>
<td></td>
<td>REDUCED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio drama</td>
<td></td>
<td>REDUCED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m. national TV news, First Edition (produced in Melbourne; only national news service produced outside Sydney)</td>
<td></td>
<td>GONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review</td>
<td></td>
<td>GONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independently made Australian TV documentaries</td>
<td></td>
<td>REDUCED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television drama</td>
<td></td>
<td>REDUCED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgets of News, Four Corners, Lateline, Foreign Correspondent, Landline, Australian Story, Defining Moments</td>
<td></td>
<td>REDUCED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330 staff positions</td>
<td></td>
<td>GONE</td>
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</tbody>
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### Cuts to ABC programs in 1997-98 (to meet $55 million reduction)

**Radio**

- Artists’ fees and performances payments for Triple J Radio, National and Classic FM | REDUCED |
- Saturday National | GONE |
- The Week in Film | REDUCED |
- Food program | GONE |
- Click On | GONE |
- The Box Seat | GONE |
- Arts National | REDUCED |
- Music Deli | REDUCED |
- Earthbeat environmental program | REDUCED |
- Religious affairs programs | REDUCED |
- Science programs | REDUCED |

**News and Current Affairs**

- Satellite use for Lateline and other programs | REDUCED |
- Hanoi overseas correspondent (The only Australian reporter in Hanoi) | REDUCED |

**Television**

- Sunday Afternoon studio presentations and interviews | CANCELLED |
- Talking Heads with Jenny Brockie | CANCELLED |
- Golfing Tournaments coverage | CANCELLED |
- Defining Moments | REDUCED |
- Acquisition of Australian Documentaries (second year in row) | CUTO BACK |
- Local drama production | REDUCED |

**Planned TV Shows**

- Late Night comedy co production series | SCRAPPED |
- New sit com series | SCRAPPED |

**Overseas broadcasting**

- Australia Television | SOLD |
Radio Australia Cantonese, Thai and French services 
Radio Australia Indonesian and Mandarin services 
Darwin transmitters

Additional Federal Government actions include:
The planned government funding for special Triple J Net website
(elements of it incorporated into existing site) 
Planned government transmitter expansion of Triple J to further regional area
. Government ABC and SBS transmitter expansion
. Government promise to hand over transmitters to ABC (and SBS)
. National Television Agency prepared for privatisation
. ABC orchestras (and a further $32 million cut from the ABC’s base budget)
(Source: Friends of the ABC, Melbourne, 1997)

In two years, ABC staffing (excluding orchestras) will have been reduced by around one in five, from about 5,000 to 4,000. A further 700 staff positions have been targeted, which will lead to further programming cuts in both television and radio. The real impact of the second round of cuts will not be felt until 1998, as many TV programs are already ‘in the can’ or in production. By February 1998 most staff cuts will have occurred and new production will diminish.

Some of the ABC’s top talents are taking redundancy packages and drifting away, and the full effect of this talent drain won’t be felt until later this year. The inevitable result of these cumulative cuts is ‘thinning’ of programs - more repeats on radio, more BBC material, more music programs and recordings, and greater reliance on talkback segments as ‘filler’.

Even if the government preserves the ABC’s budget at its present level of around half a billion dollars, the effect on programs in future years will be much, much worse than the losses listed above.

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Errol Hodge, Senior Lecturer in Journalism at Monash University, worked in ABC radio and television news for more than 25 years. Among his postings were head of the ABC bureau in Jakarta, and radio and television correspondent in New York. From 1978 to 1985, he was editor of the ABC’s overseas service, Radio Australia. He is the author of the definitive book on Radio Australia, Radio Wars: Truth, propaganda and the struggle for Radio Australia, published by Cambridge University Press in 1990. He was previously Queensland President of the Friends of the ABC.
Raymond Williams: The godfather of media studies

Martin Hirst

An introduction to grey collar journalism

As my colleague Richard Phillipps points out there are two possible readings of this paper’s title. The ambiguity is deliberate. Williams is the godfather in the gentle sense of being the venerated benefactor of an extended family to whom one turns for spiritual advice. And he’s a godfather in the Coppola sense; evil incarnate. It is a title applied with more than a little respect and humour.

I acknowledge Williams’ important influence on my own thinking, but like an unruly teenager, I am now rebelling against his paternalistic advice. In my eyes Raymond Williams abandoned the ‘one true faith’ when he rejected revolutionary Marxism in favour of an ameliorative and reformist position on the autonomy of cultural forms. By this I mean Williams’ insistence, especially in his later work, on the separation of cultural production from the system of capitalist commodity production. My PhD (Grey collar journalism: The social relations of news production), examines the thesis that journalism can be seen as the production of a cultural artefact (‘news’), but that this can best be analysed, understood and critiqued as a production process within a definable set of social, though fundamentally economic, relationships.

In this paper, I’m making several related arguments in favour of a possible theoretical framework for the analysis of journalism as work. I am suggesting that in order to understand the journalistic product, we need to understand all dimensions of the production process. My approach can be broadly characterised as a political economy of journalism.

I am also taking a position in a polemic with postmodernism, in particular some recent work by media theorist John Hartley, which directly addresses journalism as a form of cultural production. I argue that postmodernists have made a fundamental error in theory by embracing the (mistaken) idea that forms of ‘cultural production’, such as journalism, are somehow beyond the constraints of the economic (Hartley 1996, p. 237). Against this I posit the thesis that a grounded study of journalism must first come to terms with the ‘social relations’ of news production. Cultural studies would charge that my position is a form of rigid and outdated Marxist orthodoxy, derisively known as ‘economic determinism’. Of course, I don’t think so.

Rather, I would suggest that it’s writers like John Hartley who ultimately fall back on a ‘cultural determinist’ position that’s as flawed as the Stalinist model of economic determinism he seeks to criticise. Hartley’s position is based on the false and misleading assumption that:

culture - the discursive, media, knowledge-producing and sense-making sphere of life - might itself determine such matters as class, conflict and the state (Hartley 1996, p. 237).

My aim is to show how the economic form (relations of production) does in fact determine the cultural production of media artefacts; in this case the news we read, listen to and watch.

The work I’m doing on postmodernism and the Marxist model of base and superstructure has led me to read some early works by Marxists on the relationship between ‘art’ and ‘work’; ‘class’ and ‘culture’; ‘economics’ and ‘aesthetics’. There’s no space here to argue this point in detail, but a short statement from Marxism and art (Solomon 1979) encapsulates my current thinking on this matter.

Art is a distinct form of the labour process in which - amid the myriad effusions and narcotic productions of class culture - is kept alive and materialised imagery of man’s hope and of that very same human essence which Marxism seeks to reveal (Solomon 1979, p. 20).

The work of the artist, or in fact any producer of cultural artefacts - among which I include journalists and the news media - is in every instance a process of expending human labour and transforming nature via the use of tools. It is ‘work’ and it occurs within a confining set of economic and social circumstances. However, there is a sense in which, unlike the alienated labour of a factory or office worker, the work of an artist connects with the hopes, aspirations, fears and dreams of humanity. Thus it ‘talks’ to the rest of society about the human condition.

It is my contention that journalism can be positioned somewhere in between, and shares many characteristics of the assembly line and artistic endeavour. Hence not the white collar of the professional, nor the blue collar of wharfies, but grey collared journalists. I don’t address it here, but this position is taken, in part, from Harry Braverman’s Labor in monopoly capitalism (1974) about the proletarianisation of office-type (white collar) work.

Grey collar journalism will argue that the function of news as a commodity (ie to make advertising space attractive to those who can use it) implies that the social relations of news production also take on this commodity form. In this sense the majority of journalists are waged or salaried workers, and their labour realises surplus value for the shareholders of that chunk of productive ‘capital’ (the television network, or newspaper baron). My thesis is also a critique of the postmodernist analysis of journalism and Hartley’s suggestion that journalism itself has become “postmodern”:

Postmodern journalism is capitalized cultural studies, semiotics with funding, a carefully controlled textualization of politics for a popular readership which is highly literate in a mediasphere where scholarship has scarcely ventured (1996, p.127).
Without going into detail, I think that Hartley's suggestion is ludicrous. I've argued elsewhere (Guerke & Hirst 1996) that it's no coincidence that "cultural studies" appears prominently in John Hartley's theorisation ("textualization") of journalism. To suggest as he does, that one 1994 edition of French Vogue, edited by Nelson Mandela, constitutes a new form of "Postmodern political journalism" (p. 127); or that a random collection of stories about Kylie Minogue and Sophie Lee constitutes a highly personalised and sexualised new form of journalism, speaking directly to the "quintessentially Australian 'class' which lives in 'the' suburbs, the petit bourgeoisie," (p. 188), is highly debatable.

If they're not in "the" suburbs, where does Hartley think that other "quintessentially Australian" class, the proletariat, has gone? Do Melbourne wharfies, as Peter Reith would have us believe, really live in glamorous and expensive inner-city apartments? Do 'ordinary' workers mix with the 'glitterati' in the 'high roller' room of Star City casino? No, they die ugly deaths on the footpath outside.

Apart from being fundamentally wrong about the true nature of class and class struggle in Australia (trust me on this), Popular reality makes only passing reference to media industries and no mention at all of what journalists actually do, or how their work is constituted. This aspect of postmodernism, its potential impact on journalism theory, is the more important focus of this paper.

I want to begin the argument for a Marxist model of journalism as work, by discussing the origins of postmodernism as a theorised explanation for ongoing and fundamental crises in contemporary capitalism. Like all theory it can never replicate the real and therefore remains partial. Other chapters of my thesis will deal with this issue more carefully, but in outline my premise is that the end of the cold war has left all the old ideological certainties in ruins. Postmodernism is an intellectually defeatist response to this uncertainty. I think Raymond Williams sums it up nicely, he describes postmodernism in art and literature as:

'these debased forms of an anguished sense of human debasement' (Williams 1983)


And just in case you missed it, here's what my favourite postmodernist, McKenzie Wark said about this book in The Australian Higher Education Supplement (30 August 1995):

Justine Etteler's The River Ophelia (Picador) has been reviewed as if it were art masquerading as trash, but it is quite the other way around. [ie: It's trash masquerading as art]... It's a Nietzschean shriek of laughter, in a woman's voice no less, that should send a cold shiver up the spineless back of any book that still parades pious, liberal feminist niceties.

To which I echo the Communist Manifesto: "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned".

In stark contrast to Wark's praise, British Marxist Lindsay German suggests that the postmodern phenomenon is no more than the artistic vision of a society, "where the market is universal, where the system itself is conservative and resistant to change, where the basic needs of millions cannot be met despite technological advance." In such a climate, "artists are bound to reflect the fragmentation and atomisation of the that society" (German, p. 41). The techniques, so celebrated by postmodernism in art and literature; pastiche, montage, deconstruction, an "ironic and detached view of the world" (German, p. 40) are in fact integral to post-war modern art. So, in short, there's nothing really new in postmodern art forms. Further, there has been no fundamental (revolutionary) break with modernism, which is the cultural form most closely aligned with commodity production and late 20th century capitalism. Having said that, I want to concentrate on post-modernism as theory:

Angela McRobbie defines post-modernism as:

an aesthetic/cultural movement whose impetus derives from the break it marks out with modernism and the avant-garde, and whose impact lies in its turning away from linearity and teloegical progress towards pastiche, quotation, parody and pluralism of style, with postmodernity as a more general condition (1994, p. 24).

In this light, she suggests:

one of the questions that remains unasked, is precisely that of the status of the future of Marxism in the 1990s (p. 25).

McRobbie argues that postmodernism in theory has given its adherents the space and tools to explore the subtleties of Marxism. Her critique suggests that Marxism relies on a "form of economic reductionism in cultural theory". Of course, I disagree with this.

Raymond Williams: the godfather of cultural theory

One of the earliest exponents of the postmodern position is Raymond Williams. Williams grappled with the base-superstructure model for most of his full and active life. Eventually rejects a determining role for the base (forces + relations of production) in favour of a more Althusserian position of co-determination between economy and culture.

Williams separates 'culture' from the relations of production. It becomes disembodied and autonomous. This leads to his focus on artefacts and cultural production in and of itself.

Andrew Milner's Cultural Materialism (1993), first drew my attention to the crucial theoretical conflict over 'base' and 'superstructure' in Williams' work. At its heart is Williams and Milner's eventual rejection of a
‘determining’ role for relations of production in the relationship between ‘base’ and ‘superstructure’. Milner writes of “the central but false tenet of virtually all hitherto existing Marxist cultural theory, that of a determining base and a determined superstructure” (1993, p. 69).

It is Raymond Williams, especially from about 1977 onwards, who provides postmodernists with their theoretical armour against Marx. The link can be traced through a number of Williams’ positions; the development of ‘cultural materialism’; a confusion between competing definitions of ‘culture’; and his initial support for, and later abandonment of, a ‘determining’ role for relations of production. I suggest that once the concept of over-determination, by relations of production, is removed and ‘cultural production’ becomes co-determinant within the social formation, the relevance of class, to both politics and theory, is lessened.

Postmodernism, in its “playfulness” (McRobbie 1993, p. 3), abandons a fundamental principle of Marxism; that history is driven by class struggle and therefore the ‘world historic’ role of the conscious proletariat lies in emancipating labour from the commodity form, once and forever. The key to this postmodern dilemma may very well be in their very hands, but hidden from their view. Andrew Milner puts it very well in an unconsciously borrowed ‘term of abuse’ (Williams 1983a, p. 157); postmodernism only exists within, ‘the very conditions of its theoretical novelty’ (Milner 1993, p. 69).

There is a consistent confusion in Williams and in much postmodernist theory between ‘cultural’ and ‘society’ and ‘culture’ as the ‘artefacts’ of the process of ‘cultural production’. This is evident in the way that Williams jumps between two conceptualisations of culture: from ‘culture’ as the sum total of lived experience (1983b, p. 140); to the artefacts of ‘popular culture’ as “jokes and gossip, of everyday singing and dancing, of occasional dressing-up and extravagant outbursts of colour” (1983b, p. 146).

The dichotomy in cultural studies, between culture and society is itself the product of postmodernists taking on the modernist ideology that puts ‘culture’ on a pedestal outside both politics and economics (Milner 1993, p. 3). Hence, we might suggest that the postmodernist fetishism of cultural theory, to the exclusion of political economy, is the re-ification of culture as somehow ‘outside’ economics and therefore not subject to what Marx describes as the ‘iron laws’ of history.

Within postmodernism (and cultural studies more generally) there is a fascination with phenomena divorced from their material, ‘generative’ sources. Milner (1993, p. 4) suggests that this is ‘initially the creation of European Romanticism’ and its trajectory into postmodernism is observable in art, architecture and literary criticism. This can be linked to Raymond Williams’ critique of the Marxist base superstructure model and in retrospect to Hartley’s argument in Popular reality about journalism’s role in the Enlightenment, particularly the French revolution, 1789 to 1794 (Hartley 1996, p. 77).

Milner’s excellent appraisal of Raymond Williams agrees with his rejection of the “economic structures” of the base determining “all other social life” (Williams 1983a, p. 101). This central concept of Marxist thought is dismissed as one of the more “extreme positivist versions of a wholly or generally predictable process [that] have produced correspondingly reductive versions of the ‘play of events’ which are called...empiricism or pragmatism” (Williams 1983a, p. 101).

However, as Milner notes, Williams was not against the base and superstructure proposition from the beginning. In Problems in materialism and culture (1980) Williams summarises a version of the formula that allows for specified ‘determination’ by the ‘base’.

In this case the base is not merely economic; it covers the primary reproduction of society; the superstructure is a whole range of cultural practices and determination occurs in the setting of limits, or the exertion of pressures by the base on the superstructure (the dialectic). Thus at various ‘moments’ we see the relative autonomy, or strength, of competing social forces. As Milner (1993, p. 61) notes, this rightly reintroduces the element of ‘agency’ (conscious activity by ‘emergent’ social forces) into Marxist theory after the years of Stalinist wilderness. But at the same time it signals, for Williams, a move away from the orthodox Marxist position of the economic base as the relations of production and towards a more abstract, literary ‘cultural theory’.

In keeping with his subject, Milner relates his exposition to examples from Raymond Williams’ many works of literary criticism: in particular, to his argument with the French structuralists (Milner 1993, p. 65). The structuralists, Williams accuses, reduce the production of literary and other ‘cultural’ works to their moment of consumption (Milner 1993, p.66). However, both Williams and Milner themselves miss the connection of this reductionism to their own positions. In no sense can production be reduced to consumption; and one step further, without production there can be no consumption.

While correctly criticising the structuralists notion of a “decentred author” (Williams 1977, p. 198; Milner 1993, p. 66) they adopt its postmodernist variation: the decentred ‘cultural’ individual, not ‘workers’. This manifests as a celebration of ‘difference’ and a denial of the ‘commonality’ engendered by global relations of production. Here determination is crucially important. In his own review of Williams’ work, Terry Eagleton (1989) defends the base-determination-superstructure formulation against what he says is Williams’ circularity, caused by allowing “cultural production” equal determinative force with the relations of production (Williams 1980, p. 245; Eagleton 1989, pp. 168-169).

Williams and Milner apply the term ‘cultural materialism’ to their theoretical break with Marxism on the
question of base and superstructure. Milner indicates that for Williams this was a necessary response to already
existing postmodern cultural forms, which were a by-product of advanced capitalism: a response to radical
differences in the social relations of cultural process (Williams 1980, p. 245; Milner 1993, p. 67). In response I would ask are
these changes really a radical departure from the normal process of capital accumulation and regeneration?

Williams argues that the commodification of cultural production reaches its apogee with the arrival of
postmodernism; and that in this period art forms and popular entertainments become “debased forms of an anguished
sense of human debasement” (Williams 1983, p. 141). While I can agree with Williams up to this point, I disagree
strongly with Milner’s qualification that this phenomenon is “unamenable to analysis in terms of any base/superstructure metaphor” (Milner 1993, p. 68). I argue that the general features of a ‘postmodern’ cultural landscape
can be explained quite easily by reference to the political economy of Marx and the work intellectuals who continue
to promote his methods and explore his many insights. This, not postmodern dilletantism, is the real Marxist tradition.

Alex Callinicos and Classical Marxism

In The postmodern condition, Frederick Jameson’s arguments are along the lines that postmodernism is the
logical cultural outcome of multinational capitalism, where social relations have been fragmented. His starting
point is the twin crises of representation that bedevil late capitalism. The crisis of economics, which manifests itself
as declining rates of profit and the rising organic composition of capital; and the crisis of ideology, the de-legitimation
of existing models of civil society and the state (what Habermas calls the public sphere, and Hartley the semiosphere)
- both Stalinist and liberal-democratic - by the end of the Cold War.

However, whether or not we are in an actually existing ‘postmodern’ world, the central question for Marxist
social critics must still be: What are the prevailing relations of production? There are a number of responses to this
question; the postmodern relies on an interpretation of what’s come to be known as post-Fordism, or a theory of
post-industrial society.

The post-Fordist response to the crisis of legitimation is that industrial capitalism is over, this is the age of
information capitalism. A number of consequences follow from this:

- consumption, not production is determinant;
- there’s a multi-skilled core workforce of ‘relatively’ privileged white and male workers, the rest are peripheral
  and shade into the so-called ‘underclass’ at the bottom end; women and minorities especially miss out;
- the state has been weakened by new methods of ‘private’ production and consumption and the
  internationalisation of capital;
- cultural life has become more fragmented and pluralistic.

My thesis suggests that in order to sustain this argument the theory of the postmodern must also argue that
postmodernism predicated on a break with the modern. That is with the production and social relations of commodity
production; postmodernists should be able to argue that the ‘postmodern world’ is founded on a fundamentally
different production system to that of monopoly, or ‘late’ capitalism. I haven’t got the space here to defend the
whole idea, but I argue that postmodernism (if it is anything at all) is a deliberate intensification of commodity
fetishism - via advertising and the commercialisation of ‘popular reality’ - that assists dysfunctional ‘capital’ to
squeeze the last drops of profit from an almost fatal economic malaise.

The Marxist alternative to the postmodern explanation of delegitimation is, at the same time, a rebuttal of
crude/vulgar economic determinism. Two most prominent exponents of this position are Chris Harman and Alex
Callinicos. They are British socialists and academicians who are virtually ignored by their contemporaries in cultural
studies and postmodern theory. For example, Callinicos wrote Against Postmodernism in 1989, but I have not yet
found one postmodernist who’s read it, or is prepared to tackle it in reply. His latest book, Theories and Narratives
(1995) takes this critique of postmodernism even further. I imagine it will be largely unread by the very group it is
attacking.

In Against postmodernism, Callinicos is sharply critical of the post-Fordist notions of ‘deindustrialised’
capitalism. He calls it “mind-numbing reductionism” which “grossly exaggerates[es] the extent of the changes involved
[in capitalism] and fail[s] to theorise them properly” (1989, p. 135).

There is a wealth of empirical evidence that manufacturing has not disappeared in favour of ‘service’ economies,
especially when capitalism is examined as a global system. Postmodernism’s blindness to these issues is exemplified
in a recent issue of 21C (#25, n.d.) where McKenzie Wark wrote on “Pop politics”, extolling the virtues of the
‘virtual’ world. I am keenly looking forward to writing a detailed critique of this idea (a carry over from Virtual
reality and Virtual republic); the title will be “But somebody’s got to make the Tamogochi”; and its central point
that the ‘virtual’ is founded on the real. In this case ‘virtual pets’ (Tamogochi) are manufactured by men, women
and children in appalling conditions, for slave wages; yet they are marketed and sold for vast profits. In terms of this
paper similar arguments can be made for much of the ‘fashion’ media championed by John Hartley in Popular
reality.
A short note on Base and superstructure

It is time to bite the bullet and confront the base/superstructure monster, and at this stage I must say that here I am relying primarily on recent interpretations of Marx and Engels. I will return to the spring another time. I have briefly outlined my initial ideas on base and superstructure in the few remaining pages. There are ‘working diagrams’ that go with this material, but I’ll save them for another time. I have adopted a shorthand code for dealing with some of these concepts and acknowledge several pieces by Harman and Callinicos that profoundly influence my thinking.

The economic base is simply the forces of production (labour plus technology) [F/p] + relations of production [R/p]. This is a dynamic relationship in which the production of commodities for profit can continue until conflict created by the unequal and exploitative system in which production is socially organised causes stagnation at the level of further development of the forces of production. As Harman notes, this is a wholistic system, involving humanity in the creation of an inherently unstable economic and cultural edifice (society, or ‘lived culture’); he says “there is a certain sense in which it is impossible to separate material production from the social relations it involves” (Harman 1986, p. 19).

Contradictions within the base, between the forces of production (our relationships with nature) and the relations of production (our relationships with each other), “find expression in arguments, organised disagreements and bitter struggle between people” (Harman 1986, p. 27). This is no more than a restatement of the line taken by Marx that in any class society - based on the unequal and private distribution of power and wealth - the specific form of the extraction of surplus value determines both the economic and cultural relationship between rulers and ruled. In Making History Callinicos says “consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict between the social forces of production and the relations of production” (1987).

Callinicos defines superstructure as “any non-economic phenomenon is part of the superstructure if that can be explained in terms of the economic structure” (Callinicos 1987, p. 174). I understand this to mean that the superstructure imposes limits on the changes that can take place in the relations of production. For example, in a liberal-democratic country like Australia the class-based organisation of the state and civil society acts as a brake on the development of the forces of production.

The economic crisis compels the bourgeoisie to use its hegemonic means of control (including the media) to vainly go on reproducing and enforcing the exploitative and alienating relations of production that prop up their increasingly useless existence. I need go no further than to mention in the same sentence John Howard, Ferdinand Marcos, Manuel Noriega and President Soeharto to underscore the continuing relevance of this point.

However, having said that I wish to add that for Chris Harman and Alex Callinicos there is no mechanical interpretation of economic determination. German (1991) clarifies what is meant by determination of the superstructure by the base as:

an understanding that ideas [cultures] do not arise from nowhere, but are the product of real social relations between real human beings.

The economic system or mode of production is both fundamental and gives rise to all sorts of institutions, ideas and cultural forms, which fit that system (German, introduction to Trotsky’s Literature and revolution 1991, p. 29).

Alex Callinicos describes this methodology as “philosophical naturalism”, which sees human beings as “continuous with the rest of nature”; understandable through the shared methods of the physical and social sciences and “seeking to explain human thought, language and action as far as possible by setting them in their physical and social contexts” (1995, p. 8).

Everyone chooses his or her favourite quotes from Marx to defend a position, of denigrate an opponent. As cultural theory developed and moved away from Marxism, the quotes became more selective. It is necessary now to examine the arguments put forward by those who defend an ‘orthodox’ view of the base/superstructure theory and what better place to start than with a quote from Marx:

Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is sold melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie all over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere.

This passage from the Communist Manifesto (Marx, K. and Engels, F. 1965) is often quoted in part, but in full it elaborates the sense in which Marx and Engels would prefer us to use the notion of determination.

To finish, another short quote from Alex Callinicos:

‘Feminists and black nationalists often complain that the concepts of Marxist class theory are “gender blind” and “race blind”. This is indeed true. Agent’s class position derives from their place in production relations, not their gender or supposed race. But of itself this does not provide grounds for rejecting Marxism, since its chief theoretical claim is precisely to explain power relations and forms of conflict such as those denoted by the terms “nation”, “gender” and “race” in terms of the forces and relations of production.’ (1987, p. 177)
Callinicos is a strong supporter of attempts to ‘totalise’ Marxism, ie: to give it explanatory powers beyond the merely economic, I think he’s right to do so. The grand-narrative is not dead, history is not over and class struggle is still the driving force in social relations.

What’s this got to do with journalism theory?

Of course this is the $64 question. At this stage I am proposing some tentative conclusions that will be further explored in the planned development of my thesis. In point form they can be summarised as:

Journalism is a labour process that is defined by the generalised social relations of commodity production. By analysing the nature of journalism as ‘work’ one can develop a better critical understanding of the politics of journalism.

By the ‘politics of journalism’ I mean the role of journalism as a form of Hartley’s “popular reality” that has both explicit and implicit ideological functions (the role the media plays in averting or exacerbating the on-going crisis of ‘legitimisation’ surrounding ‘late capitalism’).

In a broad sense news is an archetype ‘cultural commodity’ produced according to the ‘rules’ of capital. Therefore news workers, including journalists, sub-editors, etc., are also workers in the Marxist sense of being productive labour organised to produce surplus value for the owners of the enterprise.

The exploitative and alienated nature of labour in a capitalist mode of production might be expected to exist in any newsroom organised according to the principle outlined above. Consequently, a study of working conditions in the news industry might produce some useful material about the relationship between the production process (Warren Breed’s “social control in the newsroom”) and the selection, framing and placement of news content analysed from the perspective of news as “popular reality” and as a component of ruling class hegemony.

It follows that news is perhaps ‘contested’, in the sense that journalism is buffeted by contradiction and competing social pressures for the hearts and minds of the news workers. I would expect there to be some evidence of this given my exposition of a ‘duality’ to news as a product of a cultural, yet distinctly commodity-based production process.

This argument is yet to be tested but a number of indicators, such as the Henningham and Schultz surveys over several years and my own interviews with political journalists, suggest it is worth pursuing.

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Please note: This paper does not rely only on a reading of this work by Williams. In editing the paper I have removed references to several of his other books. However, I would like to note the following texts: Keywords (1983); Problems in materialism and culture (1980; Orwell (1984 revised edition); The politics of modernism: Against the new conformists (1989).

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The godfather of media studies: Raymond Williams’s search for the public good

Richard Phillipps

Raymond Williams (1921-1988), Welsh-born, Cambridge-educated cultural theorist, seems throughout his life and writings to strive always for a clearer view of what might be in the best interests of society (however impossible that is to define, though a pattern emerges over time). Journalism codes of ethics proclaim adherence to the public interest. That surely is what public relations too should aim to do in its highest sense as negotiating outcomes, building relationships between conflicting viewpoints.

Williams's positions do change. As an undergraduate at Cambridge he is clearly socialist and communist, with a deep feeling for the poor. Before the second world war Williams views himself as a Christian pacifist, yet as Hitler becomes more aggressive he realises he will have to fight. Soon after joining an anti-tank regiment he is recognised as officer material and as a captain fights with distinction in France, Belgium and Germany.

After finishing his undergraduate and postgraduate studies and working in adult education, Williams spends about 20 years in the intellectually rich and privileged life of Cambridge: lecturer by 1961, reader by 1967, professor by 1974. But he is not content with that. Besides running popular courses at university, he works hard at “literary criticism, political theory, novels, the odd television play, political oratory, extra-Parliamentary politics, Guardian book reviewing, commentary in the journals of opinion, and for four years from 1968 to 1972, monthly television criticism for the BBC's house weekly, The Listener.” (Inglis, 1995: 222).

He views the marketing techniques of the post World War 2 era as part of a “magic system” propping up a strange world where people consume things not because they are useful but because they validate in fantasy an irrational way of life where choice between goods advertised is not based on how well they perform. In his writings he shows his intense dislike of many features of today's society - cars, giant supermarkets, cheap fashion - and the expressways and fast roads destroying the British countryside.

He champions the causes of those who have been wronged, of the outspoken and even revolutionary, of political refugees, the exploited and oppressed. He fights the hatred of the Left, exemplified in the decision to expel one of his research students, Rudi Dutschke, a radical student leader in Germany, who had been shot in the head and had the speech centres in his brain damaged at the height of European student dissent in 1967. He knows plenty of decent police, feels sympathy for them but is alarmed at “popular approval for strong authority, law-and-order, the suppression of dissent and non-conformity” expressed in the high British ratings for police shows. “Does the BBC have to put itself so simple-mindedly on one side of the argument... as naturally, as casually as, say, it supports King Hussein?” writes Williams the TV critic. He views the start of the Margaret Thatcher era as a new kind of authoritarian British state, when “the Royal Yorkshire mounted police, bussed in from all over England, charged striking miners on the field of Orgreave, and ran them down with clubs” (Inglis, 1995: 230).

Would he be at home in Australia, late 1990s? Probably not. Australians too have a fascination with law and order, with police shows on TV and they have a fear of speaking out. Williams’s Towards 2000 (1983) shows how deeply he detests many of the ways society is transforming itself – the trend to do-it-yourself work, cutting out trained, paid labour, the switch from local relaxation to jet-setting holidays abroad. Yet in his works we see a distrust of public monopolies. Maybe he would be reconciled to the increasing importance of public relations in negotiating between society’s many publics and explaining these dramatic changes to a populace increasingly having to switch to part-time jobs and volunteer work to find meaning in their lives.

Williams and public relations

What Williams knew of public relations, he disliked intensely. He did not see its theory and practice as value-neutral, as many do today. He viewed public relations people as inevitably apologists for the dominant order of society, always trying to paint the best possible picture when the reality was bleak. Politicians with glib answers for long-standing problems came in for his sternest condemnation: they saw themselves either as “crisis-managers, with themselves as self-evident crisis heroes” or the sort who will “go on presenting detailed policies” as if the international crises which beset any government – monetary disasters, oil price hikes, wars, Northern Ireland conflict and so on – could in some way be ignored:

"...What is called management of a crisis is never a merely neutral process of local response, adjustment and negotiation. It is typically a practical disclosure of existing forces and interests. Against such real pressures, not only public-relations manifestos but on their own even genuine locally-conceived programs stand little chance of success." (Williams, 1983: 11)

He was quite taken by the methods of system dynamics which came into vogue in the 1970s and 1980s, especially the move to extend the timescale in economic and political forecasting as set out in the 1972 report Limits to Growth. Systems theory is now being combined with the study of ethical issues to sharpen the awareness of public relations practitioners about broader issues, the sort Williams loved to ponder.
As Michael Karlberg from Simon Fraser University states, the time has come for public relations researchers to start thinking more broadly about the considerable body of academic research into the area - have we indeed shown "little interest in the broader social implications" of our research? We examine industry problems, we research many topics - for instance, in issues and crisis management - and practitioners can see the worth of what we do, but does society as a whole achieve much benefit? Karlberg asserts that "public relations research to date has privileged - or subsidised - certain segments of the population in their public communications capabilities and marginalised others to the periphery of public discourse". (Karlberg, 1996: 264)

**Williams and cultural theory**

Martin Hirst in his paper calls Raymond Williams "the godfather of media studies". This is probably too grand a title and one Williams himself might smile at were he here today, especially now the Godfather I, II and III movies (1972, 1974 and 1990) have transformed the meaning of the name to a more sinister personage. But his works, from *Culture and Society* (1958) onwards, had great influence and his output was prodigious. Ward (1981) writes that Williams is preoccupied with culture and with how the media interprets culture: this is "the central theme and motif" in the whole of his career. He gradually shifts emphasis from "the liberal to the Marxist tradition, the intellectual steady-gaze to the more palpable expression of personal involvement", stressing from the first a common way of life, later emphasising "renewal, change and re-creation".

Klaus (in Morgan and Preston, 1993: 88) says Williams adopted the concept of "cultural materialism" in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) before it became in vogue among academics in the humanities. Klaus believes the "core elements" are in opposition to subjectivist idealism and the idea of culture as a satellite or reflection of economic production; that cultural materialism emphasises:

- multiple cultural practices
- material means of cultural production
- the material and social character of language
- culture as a constitutive social process
- a resolutely historical approach to the cultural past
- economic aspects of culture should not be reduced to industrial production
- an opposition to technological determinism, and
- an opposition to historical determinism (ibid., 90-101).

Is this what we glean from Williams's later works? In general, yes. His positions are consistent with the above eight points. In *Towards 2000*, Williams devotes a chapter to media technology and culture. He certainly resists the idea that there should be "a high culture, to be preserved by education" and made accessible to everyone. He stresses diversity, rails against the "unholy combination of technological determinism with cultural pessimism". (Williams, 1983: 129) New technology is not always a winner. Sometimes a discovery is proclaimed as something that will sweep the world, there is massive investment in its processes and marketing, yet it flops.

Williams criticises the price to be paid with the new "paranational" technologies of cable and satellite - the social costs, lip service to or the abandonment of local culture, more unemployment, the bypassing or reduction of national cultural industries:

'Free money! The godfathers are taking us to the point where it will seem cheaper, everywhere, to be steadily ruined or simply to give up. The known alternative principle, of common provision of all necessary common services, will be made to appear a receding utopianism, though it remains our only realistic hope of varied and responsive communications systems' (Williams 1983: 139).

There's that 'godfather' word again! It makes us wonder whether Hirst is adopting Williams as the "godfather of media studies" in a positive sense, since Williams had already been using the godfather word in a negative sense more than a decade earlier.

Williams realises that organisations such as the arts councils, the BBC [and, by implication, the ABC here in Australia] are facing a rear-garde action against the new centralising forces with a few dominant centres of 'universal' production, coupled with the new technologies of cable and satellite. He predicts that they would either join forces with the new dominant modes or be outflanked; that in the end they would get little help from governments.

The same chapter contains another swipe at public relations. Williams discusses the wider trends in media and society, including an increasingly home-based culture, people gathering electronically rather than in person. He notes the major rises in production costs of cultural materials forced not only by production workers' wage rises but also by "an adaptation to the norms of an international cultural market". He objects to the swapping of advertising money for sponsorship, assumed to be "free money", contradicting the old adage that money doesn't grow on trees. But of course there are strings:

There is no free money. It is all spent for calculated and usually acknowledged purposes: in immediate trading, but also to substitute a healthy for an unhealthy association (as in tobacco sponsorship of sports), or to reassure what are called 'opinion-formers', or to enhance, as it is slyly put, a 'public image'. The general mantra is for the public reputation of capitalism' (Williams 1983: 138).
Williams and popular culture

Williams was prepared to live with the description “popular culture”, if by that term was meant “the culture actually made by the people for themselves”. McGuigan (in Morgan and Preston, 1993: 164) comments that “the flaky surface of sedimented meanings” [of popular culture] is treacherous.” There is the sense of popular culture as inferior work, also the one of work made to trap deliberately the widest possible market, or displaced to the past as folk culture, or just as “well-liked by many people” (Williams, 1976: 199).

Williams was critical of the “magic system” of advertising which draws on art and popular culture:

The structural similarity between much advertising and much modern art is not simply copying by the advertisers. It is the result of comparable responses to the contemporary human condition, and the only distinction that matters is between the clarification achieved by some art and the displacement normal in bad art and most advertising” (Williams 1980: 190).

If journalists tend to be the cynics, painting everything blackest and every motive impure, public relations people are the whitewash experts, painting everything purple and promising or at least rosy. But to Williams, the best advertising gurus are “the skilled magicians, masters of the masses” – exploiting and exploited by the general weakness of the audiences: “Advertising is then no longer merely a way of selling goods, it is a true part of the culture of a confused society”. There was of course much bad advertising “not the cool creation of skilled professionals, but the confused creation of bad thinkers and artists” (ibid.: 190, 191). Williams saw clearly that all this satisfying of false need via the magic system of advertising and public relations carried with it the problem that eventually the needs thus created in the “widely expectant” majority could outstrip the controls inserted by the minority:

“What was once the local absurdity of puffing is now a system of mimed celebration of other people’s decisions. As such, of course, advertising is very closely related to a whole system of styles in official politics. Indeed some of its adepts have a direct hand in propaganda, in the competition of the parties and in the formation of public opinion’ (Williams 1988: 193).

Williams and issues in the media, culture and society today

Ward (1981) sums up Williams’s rather gloomy view of communication media, culture and the world as “a form of mild, pragmatic utopianism” – not a nostalgia for the past or a yearning for some ideal and impossible future but, just like the complex culture of his Wales, a culture where even small and dependent countries can throw off constraints and make their own future. Williams realised the constraints well enough – the swelling local and global environmental problems, the changes in the international economic structure, the emphasis on short-term profit, for instance – but he believed that alternative answers, “interactive and dynamic” which already existed on a small scale would emerge to provide broader-based solutions. Such an alternative society was not outlined by Marx who along with his capitalist opponents was willing to sacrifice nature, to transform it, to use it as raw material in the workers’ control over production.

But capitalist and communist societies have come to realise that nature has its own steady and quiet way of biting back; that local and global environmental problems cannot be ignored and compounded forever. The effects of climate change, for instance, are becoming more apparent.

Issues of free trade and free reign for giant transnational organisations are also at the heart of the debate over culture. Citizens and governments of many persuasions are coming to the view that multinational companies with incomes bigger than many a country’s gross national product do not necessarily have the wider interests of society at heart. Williams decried the economics of British publishing which put at risk daily newspapers with considerable public opinion’ (Williams 1988: 193).

Who is to help build this “shared belief” in “practical alternatives”? The same public relations theory and practice that bolsters the dominant order can just as easily be used to bolster the alternatives. Karlberg suggests that it is “not enough, as the current research agenda suggests, for already privileged organisations to adopt more...
symmetrical approaches to public relations. Symmetry assumes that all segments of the population have the communications skills and resources to represent themselves in public discourse.” (Karlberg, 1996: 273)

There needs to be new research into ways in which citizens can be empowered to gain the skills necessary to represent broader interests than capital: how to forge alliances, appeal to reason, win votes. Like Williams, many have what some would call a touchingly naive faith in the democratic system which has tended to counter the strongest swings, if given enough time. The rewards for the alternative practitioners will certainly be less in monetary terms, but many able people can see that money isn’t everything. In some views of reality, it is nothing. Even the economists will admit to this sometimes, Kenneth Davidson writes:

'Unless economists can adjust their measurements of value to the changing values in society, they could be in danger of losing their moral authority, just as kings and priests began to lose their authority two centuries ago' (Davidson, The Age, July 5, 1997: B3).

Moral authority is something Williams seemed to retain throughout most of his life, although in the Britain of Thatcher’s era he withdrew from active pronouncements on politics (coughed occasionally discreetly from the sidelines, as biographer Fred Inglis puts it) to concentrate on his writing and on helping his research students. He realised he could reach many more people that way. His style and his output provide an object lesson for journalism and public relations academics here today.

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Deng's Media: Debunking Schramm

Chengju Huang

Deng’s media reform throws new light on the inadequacy of Schramm’s “Soviet” model.

Since the publication of Four Theories of the Press (Siebert et al 1956), Wilbur Schramm’s essay “The Soviet Communist Theory of the Press” as a part of the “four theories” myth, has often been invoked or understood by western communication scholarship as a universal conceptual framework of understanding the world’s socialist media philosophies and systems (e.g. Rivers & Schramm 1969; Merrill & Lowenstein 1971; Schramm 1973, 1982; Merrill 1974; Brash & Ullof 1986; Hachten 1987; Lowenstein & Merrill 1990; Lambeth 1995). In Altschull’s (1984:107-108, emphasis added) words, Schramm’s thesis is “The most widely influential examination of the socialist press model written in the capitalist world” and “has become conventional wisdom in the United States and elsewhere.”

Meanwhile, specifically, in western scholarship, the mass communication in “communist China” under both Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping has been widely regarded as giving strong support to the “universality” of the Schramm schema (e.g. Schramm 1973, 1981, 1982; Lu 1980; Hachten 1987; Zhu 1991; Chaudhary & Chan 1995; Lambeth 1995). Furthermore, along with the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the crackdown on the massive student demonstration in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in 1989, China has been almost naturally regarded by the West as, in Altschull’s (1995:251) words again, “the most powerful remaining practitioner of Marxist ideology”, and thus naturally again the number one practitioner of Schramm’s “Soviet Communist” model (e.g. Lambeth 1995).

Differing from previous studies of the media reform in Deng’s China which are dominated or shadowed by Schramm’s “Soviet Communist” model, this paper revisits the relationship of the Schramm schema and Deng’s media. Deng’s post-Cultural Revolution media reform has, this paper argues, brought current Chinese mass communication a very different landscape in both theory and practice from that in Mao’s era. While there is little doubt about Mao’s media being copied from Schramm’s “Soviet Communist” model (e.g. Schramm 1973, 1978, 1982; Lu 1979; Sun 1993), the one in Deng’s era, however, has been a very different story from the description of the Schramm schema. And such an argument has also called the “universality” of Schramm’s “Soviet Communist” model into question. The author argues that Deng Xiaoping’s post-Cultural Revolution media reform deserves close attention as it throws new light on the inadequacy of the Schramm schema.

Deng’s Media: Beyond the “Soviet” model

Today’s China is the biggest “advancing”, “communist” “market”-oriented state [1] with the world’s fastest-growing economy for nearly 20 years (China looming 1996). In contrast with Tito’s and Gorbachev’s media reforms (Robinson 1977; Underwood 1983; Stevenson et al 1987) which have become historical records, Deng’s post-Cultural Revolution media reform since late 1970s has arguably made it the most lively and extraordinarily practical development in socialist history.

For years, scholars have tried to rethink the media reform in Deng’s China (e.g. Luter & Richstad 1983; Cheek 1989; Chang et al 1993; Hong 1993; Chan 1994; Chu 1994; Lee 1994; Sun 1996). However, few of them have definitely tried to revisit Deng’s media reform beyond the influential Schramm schema. Questioning the adequacy of the Schramm schema’s so-called “universality”, this paper argues that Deng’s media in fact can hardly be explained by the Schramm schema in several important ways.

Since the end of the Cultural Revolution, China has been in the transition from Mao’s (1977) “taking class struggle as the key link” to Deng’s (1983) “political work must serve the economic construction” of China. From this there followed a move from planned economy to market economy as the basis of the press system. Under the state financing in Mao’s era, to both media and journalists, losing audiences meant losing nothing. However, under Deng’s market model, news media must compete for revenue in order to survive. For examples, in contrast to no advertising in news media during the Cultural Revolution, in January and February 1993, Shanghai’s Wenhui Daily twice sold its front page for advertisements (Chu 1994). In contrast to the one-fourth of 1985 (Chinese Journalism Yearbook 1986), by 1992 one-third of the newspaper offices could break even or make profits (Lee 1994). In 1990 about one-third of the operating cost of Chinese television was derived not from the state but from advertising and other business revenues (Chan 1994). Only 3 years later, in 1993, all TV stations got most of their revenue from commercials (Variety 1 February, 1993:116-117).

While the Chinese government is unwilling and unable to totally endure the heavy financial burden from the news media in the era of reform, the Chinese Communist Party (the CCP) has also relaxed (or has had to relax) its political and ideological controls over the news media (Yu 1990; Chang et al 1993; Chan 1994). The CCP, while still firmly controlling the news media, is apparently (although gradually) abandoning its traditional ossified journalism philosophy, a so-call “Marxist journalism” as described in Schramm’s “Soviet” theory. Three obvious changes relating to the CCP’s journalism philosophy deserve to be mentioned here: (1) The function of the news media has been largely expanded. While news media were regarded as almost pure “propagandist tools” in Mao’s
When Schramm Meets Deng: Some Concluding Words

As touched upon earlier, for years many have noticed the "tremendous changes" (Sun 1996) in Chinese mass communication in Deng's era. However, researchers have seemed to still limit their thinking while struggling between the influential Schramm schema as a general "communist" theory in their heads, and the noticeable changes brought by Deng's post-Cultural Revolution media reform. Few scholars have seemed to conceptually break the fetter of the influential and durable Schramm schema, a part of the "four theories" myth which "has implanted ... rather firmly in the minds of journalism students, faculty, and practitioners." (Merrill & Lowenstein 1971:181-182).

Conceptually, such studies of Deng's media are still limited within the traditional understanding of the concept of "communism", a term relating to "oppression, totalitarianism, or other negative terms" (Cobb & Elder 1972); and "communist press", a "bad guy" as showed in Schramm's "Soviet" theory (Altschull 1984; Nerone ed 1995). However, this paper argues, ideologically coloured terms such as "Communist China" and "Chinese Communist Press" have in fact hardly conceptualised the social and media changes in post-Mao China, both in theory and practice. As many (e.g. Blackburn 1991; Baum 1994; Friedman 1995; White 1995) have indicated, along with the gradually but steadily vanishing traditional "communism" (Stalinism or Maoism), an overwhelming pragmatic approach is now rooted rather firmly in post-Mao China.

Methodologically (this follows from the above), many previous studies of Deng's media have also, consciously or unconsciously, applied a western-centered approach as an abstract yardstick to simplistically judge China's political system and its press "free" or "not free" while overlooking or underestimating China's historical specificity.

2) According to that approach, the matter of Deng's post-Cultural Revolution media reform has seemed quite simple: now that post-Mao China is still under the leadership of the CCP, no matter how many and what kinds of changes of its press has occurred, that press is naturally still a "communist model", which has been "classically" described by Schramm's "Soviet" model. Within such a convenient but also lazy or oversimplified framework, this paper argues, the significance of Deng's extraordinary post-Cultural Revolution media reform has apparently been underestimated, and even overlooked.

The Cold War has ended. Traditional "communism" (Stalinism and Maoism) is vanishing across the socialist world. While we attempt to fit Deng's media into the Schramm schema, we feel that is just like, borrowing Lowenstein's words (Merrill & Lowenstein 1971:185), "fitting the proverbial square peg into a round hole". Such an argument suggests that we have reasons to not only leave room for the unique and extraordinary Chinese case beyond Schramm's "Soviet Communist" model and the western libertarian theory, but also to question the Schramm schema's so-called "universality".

Notes

1) Here the author borrows words from Altschull's (1984:279-299) three typology of media systems, so as to suggest the complexity of Deng's media, or the inadequacy of Altschull's new model.

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The journalist and modernity: a social-theoretical approach

Steve Mackey

John Hartley suggests most journalism courses do not give students a grounding in modernity. This presents a danger that students will not properly grasp the sort of society they are in and their involvement with it. Two important theorists of modernity are Jurgen Habermas and Ulrich Beck. This paper explores what Hartley might mean with reference to the perspectives of Habermas and Beck.

Hartley

Hartley describes a lack of self-examining critical theory in relation to journalism:
‘Rarely do journalism courses ask their students to consider the conditions for journalism’s existence: where it comes from, what it is for, and how it works in the context of modernity. Students are simply asked to do it without understanding it’ (Hartley 1996:35).

This present paper agrees with Hartley and suggests that there needs to be better interaction between exponents of theory and exponents of the more vocational areas of communication in universities.

Hartley is concerned with more than the often excellent way journalism courses consider ethics, economics and ownership within the industry (e.g. Hurst & White 1994). His warning is that such training does not sufficiently analyse the way journalism as a cultural practice may be said to create or maintain the particular culture and its pathologies. For Hartley good journalists are capable of critical and reflective thinking at an academic level beyond the more obvious matters of professionalism. He is keen for journalists to take a broader responsibility for the world, which in his terms they are creating through their everyday cultural production. He is concerned about what sort of world journalists think they are in and thus what sort of a world they re-present for the rest of us to read about and thus think we are in.

‘Journalism is the sense making practice of modernity. (It is) the condition and populariser of modernism; it is the product and promoter of modern life, and is unknown in traditional societies’ (Hartley 1996:33).

Modernity is a big subject. This paper now goes on to discuss how some of the views of just two well known theorists of modernity may be made relevant for journalism.

Habermas

Jurgen Habermas is the contemporary heir to the pre and post war neo-Marxist Frankfurt School of critical theory. This academic movement grew up in opposition to fascism and was concerned about ideological practices, in particular the social, psychological and political effects of the mass media. From the 1960s Habermas side stepped the pessimism of this school and the associated lapse into post-modern theory by claiming it is still possible to come up with rational and useful over arching social theory. For Habermas modernism is about the end of superstition and the development of science and technology, including the social technologies of modern politics and public administration. The problem with thought and theory in this tradition of rational progress is that scientific, rational non-superstitious thinking - was meant to deliver utopia. Instead there have been the dystopias of world wars, genocide, the atom bomb, military and economic imperialism, racism and sexism. This is the contradiction which the early Frankfurt School and then the post modernists latched onto rejecting grand theory and advocating more contingent theories about the processes behind human understanding, knowledge and behaviour. (Best & Kellner 1991, Adorno & Horkheimer 1979, Marcuse 1972) In The Theory of Communicative Action Habermas rejects this despair with the heritage of rational thinking and sets out to construct his own over arching theory of the modern condition based on the way people communicate with each other. Habermas borrows from the approaches of ethnographers and critiques of ethnography to put forward his notion that humans are born into a particular lifeworld - a range of symbolic and language systems involving and stemming from various ways of life and cultural processes. It is this ‘lifeworld’ of symbolisms and their delivery mechanisms which provide the media by which people conceive of themselves and existence.

‘...for members of the same culture the limits of their language are the limits of the world. They can broaden the horizon of their form of life in an ad hoc manner, but they cannot step out of it.

...world views lay down the framework of fundamental concepts within which we can interpret everything which appears in the world in a specific way’ (Habermas 1991:45 Vol. One).

Habermas argues that over history ways of conceiving of the world become more varied and available as complex secular language systems develop, making anachronistic the sacredly or ritualistically defined methods such as those common to pre-literate societies. This necessity for infinitely flexible secular language to make sense in terms of the culture it emanates from without an anchor in pre-ordained sacred meansings, places enormously increased responsibilities on its modern users.

I would conjecture that there is a split in the medium of communication corresponding to the segregation of
the sacred from the profane domains of life: religious signification which makes possible a normative consensus, and thereby provides the foundation for a ritual coordination of action, is the archaic part left over from the stage of symbolically mediated interaction after experiences from domains in which perceptible and manipulable objects are dealt with in a more and more propositionally structured manner flow into communication. (Habermas 1991:54 Vol. Two)

In this sense language brokers such as journalists take the place of the priest and shaman. For Habermas such brokers face a constant responsibility to establish the validity of what they are saying in this new free-floating way of arriving at meaning. The conclusion of Habermas' theory is that society is bound together by immutable rules about how language must be used in order for language to be intelligible.

The theory also underlines the importance of everyone in a democracy being able to have a fair say if there is to be an attempt to get societies to function without pathologies. This approach to the ideal speech situation is made difficult by the systemisation of society by particular political economies and the consequent subjugation of thought within certain horizons of what is deemed by the gatekeepers to be economically, socially or politically possible within the particular economic system. Such influences limit the play of lifeworld concepts and thus limits the type of people and society which we can imagine we are.

Beck

Ulrich Beck is another, more recent German critical theorist. For Beck the style of society which has existed this century is becoming increasingly unstable ironically because of the very success of the modem capitalist, scientific-industrial way of life. He compares this instability to the way the Enlightenment made archaic and destabilised the feudal way of life. Currently there is a collapse of class solidarity, a collapse of the family, a collapse of neighbourhood or other geographically defined community. The modern economic form makes people individualised units of labour whose economic survival or success is independent of communal or family roles. Social welfare militates against the need for class based struggle or class based identities. At the same time science has ceased to be a great marvel like it was in the 19th century. The conveniences of modern life are taken for granted.

Beck suggests these changes are features of a new era which he calls reflexive modernity. This is a condition rather than an age. In reflexive modernity we are no longer looking at the benefits of modern methods for providing a good life. Life is 'as is' as it were. A high level of technology and science and highly productive capitalism are presumed. The central debates in affluent, industrial societies are more to do with quality of life, health matters, the environment - the risks associated with this mode of living. These are risks such as community and family fragmentation with its effects on children, job insecurity, acid rain, nuclear accident, s the ozone holes and so on. The term 'reflexivity' highlights a loss of sight of where these risks have come from - their production from Enlightenment thinking and its enlistment by particular modes of capitalist inspired progress of the last two centuries. We no longer see ourselves as the heirs of this particular process of modernisation. It is beyond our mode of thinking to conceive of how things could be otherwise. In Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity Beck suggests there is an emerging new politics to do with the risks of contemporary modernity and how the perceptions of these risk are fought over:

'The concept of risk is directly bound to the concept of reflexive modernisation. Risk may be defined as a systematic way of dealing with hazards and insecurities induced and introduced by modernisation itself. Risks, as opposed to older dangers, are consequences which relate to the threatening force of modernisation and to its globalisation of doubt' (Beck 1996:21).

In order for people to reflect on their situation vis-a-vis these risks they have to have information. But the ‘systems’ of the new modernity try to manage this information in such a way that people’s realisation of risks has minimum impact on the system:

'Those who find themselves in the public pillory as risk producers refute the charges as well as they can... Access to the media becomes crucial... Good arguments, or at least arguments capable of convincing the public, become a condition of business success. Publicity people, the ‘argumentation craftsmen’, get their opportunity in the organisation' (Beck 1996:32).

Beck reflects on the way these systems of modernity operate to dull consciousness through the separation of the realms of politics and science and the realms in which economic pressures act on producers and consumers. This is the sabotage of lifeworld real communication and understandings by system intervention. The role of the journalist in reflexive modernity is thus surely to re-capture a more detached, and historically informed view of why the culture is as it is.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted two approaches by theorists of modernity who might be argued to provide many notions relevant for exploration by journalism educators and their students along the lines Hartley suggests.

The implications of Habermas’ theory open up a different level of responsibility for journalists above and beyond the usual strictures that they are custodians of community history and the Queen’s English. Journalists can
be seen as custodians of the particular culture at a more fundamental level of the construction of understandings. Allied to this concept is the gatekeeper role at the level of the purposive rationality of the socio-economic system and its instrumental communication set against the total available human lifeworld ways of depicting the world.

Beck challenges those depicting the world to look out for what he claims is a new dimension of the way we may either see or may be blind to the modern condition. This is the normalisation of community and familial fragmentation and the use of the hygienic term ‘risk’ as a public relations front for environmental pollution matters which may in fact involve us in catastrophe. The consequent politics give increasing work to ‘argumentation craftsmen’ who increasingly prowl the public sphere intent on capturing its territory on behalf of the dominant corporations.

One hopes that the journalists who they meet in this sphere will be suitably intellectually equipped.

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Politics, Public Relations and the Press: The widening gap between rhetoric and reality in the western print media

Richard Stanton

Earlier this year one of America's leading coal mining companies, provided a brief to a consultant to upgrade its colliery in the New South Wales western district, east of Lithgow. The consultant went about his work and recommended longwall equipment from a Queensland mine be purchased and installed. Management agreed to the recommendation, the machinery was purchased, shipped from Queensland, and prepared for installation underground at Clarence. It could not be commissioned. It would not work in the Clarence geology. Two weeks later, the company sacked 160 employees at the mine citing poor productivity as the reason behind the decision. One hundred and sixty men from the surrounding district, but mainly from Lithgow, were out of work six weeks before Christmas. What little press coverage the sackings received followed the company line.

In 1995 Melbourne novelist and journalist Helen Garner had published her version of the events and issues leading to the sacking of the master of Melbourne University's Ormond College. In that book Garner made a number of references to a supporter of the women who filed charges against the master. The supporter, later publicly identified as Jenna Mead, a lecturer at the University of Tasmania, has now published a book titled Bodyjamming. Mead's valorisation argument is that Bodyjamming is a reply to and refutation of many of Garner's assumptions which Garner made, should never have entered the public domain.

Since the publication of Garner's book, The First Stone, there has been a great deal of debate about many things, one among them being the actual need for a book, on a case which was dismissed in the magistrates' court in Victoria with costs awarded to the accused, after Garner was unable to interview the plaintiffs for a straight journalism piece. Mead's Bodyjamming raises a similar question as many of the essays fly very close to the libel laws of this country and add nothing to the debate other than to attempt a public humiliation of Garner.

The Weekend Australian of November 15, 1997, provided a review of Bodyjamming by staff writer Kate Legge in which she makes the comment that Garner is to sexual harassment what Pauline Hanson is to multiculturalism. But any real interest in the review, from a discourse analysis point of view, is the page layout. For display, the layout sub has chosen pictures of Garner and Mead which are at once an indictment of the relationship Garner and Mead have with that newspaper's literary critics and how visual images enhance a reader's subjective views.

Now the Weekend Australian is probably a good example of a print medium which appears to be unsure of the role of public relations in disseminating information, controlling the political debate, or providing a starting point for discourse analysis, politically, economically and socially. In its November 22nd issue, on the outside front cover of the Focus section it offered a standfirst which read ... "Church leader's growing condemnation of John Howard suggests the Government is losing the PR war on native title. Yet in this exclusive interview the PM makes clear he is digging in for a long fight".

What is this thing called a PR war? Why is it necessary to publish books which trivialise an important debate and why would a story about 160 people losing their jobs because of management ineptitude not claim the objective press coverage it so desperately deserves? Rhetorical questions. Maybe. But in attempting to deal with all three issues I will, I trust, shed some light on the widening gap between reality and rhetoric even if I am unable to apply much heat.

The same Weekend Australian, in its two page special on the Wik debate offered the advice that "The Wik issue is dividing the nation even as it confuses us". Shades of Pauline. A few months ago we were led to believe we were divided on multiculturalism. Prior to that we were divided on AIDS, to that divided on gender, prior to that on communism, prior to that on war in Vietnam. I could go on.

Today's western press offers a prescription for behaviour. Actual behaviour by government is removed. While this was historically the role of the heavyweight metropolitan - The Washington Post, the New York Times, the Times, The Age, it has escalated downwards to be embraced by every regional daily and even without hesitation, by our beloved suburban weekly. The press, collectively, sees itself as placing truth before the public but what exactly is that truth?

When writing about The First Stone Janet Malcolm argued that writing accurately about reality often involves cruelty, if only because we experience events and people differently.

During the reign of King Paul the first, there were many reasons given, by way of explaining to us, the general public, that the federal government was not going to lash out and spend on infrastructure because at any moment the economy would overheat, or just around the corner there was a recession we had to have. Since the ascendency of the Howard administration to the Treasury Benches the colourful rhetoric has ceased. There is nothing colourful about the honourable Peter Costello. The rhetoric, however, while it may not be colourful, may not incite young, adrenalin or testosterone ridden reporters to concoct Walkley winning lead pars, remains. It is the
pragmatic which has altered. In fact, if we want to get really excited, we have had a paradigm shift in rhetoric which has completely thrown all but the most resolute. Put simply, while, the print media is devoting space to dead pop people, the federal government is busy gaining the ascendancy.

**What then is a PR war?**

To examine the relationship between the press and public relations, as we drive out of the postmodern and into the neo-pragmatic world of stakeholder allegiance, it is necessary to seek instruction from the past.

In ancient societies with no awareness of writing, the ability to speak informatively, cohesively, and memorably was essential and admired. In such societies chiefs, bards, and seers used a variety of techniques to gain attention and ensure retention of information (in their own as well as in listeners’ mind). Linguistic techniques included: rhythm; repetition; formulaic lists and descriptions; kinds of emphasis; balance and antithesis; ellipsis and words and devices to evoke mental images. Generic shapes, or genres, designed for the accurate retention and effective delivery of messages included; genealogy; praising and blaming; supplication and lamentation; proverbial expressions of wisdom; statements of law; threats and warnings; and other manoeuvres intended to influence and persuade.

In the course of time such techniques were organised into bodies of received knowledge. In some societies they were largely a part of religious ritual, as in India. In others, such as Greece, they were part of the craft of speaking which, in the 5th century BC, became the foundation of education in city states such as Athens and Sparta.

Rhetoric’s foremost exponents and analysts were Gorgias, Isocrates, Plato and Aristotle. As writing became commoner, elements of the oral craft were transferred to prose composition and efforts were made to harmonise the rules of speech and writing with those of logic. The devisers of rhetoric however, did not lose their links with poetry or their practical ties with the law. As a result rhetoric can be viewed in two ways; as the high moral and philosophical arts of speech and writing and as a low art of winning arguments and impressing the gullible.

During and after the Renaissance, rhetoric dominated education in the humanities in England and France, remaining little changed until the 19th century. During this period the ancient tension between good and bad rhetoric continued. The fragmentation of rhetoric that began in the Renaissance created whole new subjects in succeeding centuries. During the 17th to 19th century the methods of Cicero and Quintilian were standard in British and American universities. Yet, while students learned the classical languages and their rhetoric, their teachers were often in the forefront of change to English. Adam Smith, the 18th century Scot whom we could probably connect directly with the “Yamaichi shock” in Japan last week, chose English rather than Latin when giving his lectures. Adams’ friend Hugh Blair was appointed to the first chair of rhetoric and Belles Lettres at the University of Edinburgh in 1762, the precursor of all chairs of English language and literature around the world. In 1806, the first Boylston Professor of Rhetoric and Oratory at Harvard, Massachusetts, was John Quincy Adams (later sixth US President). He was charged to instruct students in accordance with the models and exercises of Quintilian, but when Francis J Child occupied the same chair in 1851 it was as Professor of English.

In 18th century society at large, issues of judgement and taste became more important than aesthetics and rhetoric and among romantics in the 18th and 19th centuries freedom and feeling were more intriguing than discipline and refinement. As the 19th century progressed the ancient theorists became of less and less interest except to classical scholars, and rhetoric became for many either the (empty) form of public speaking or the study of writing and composition in schools. Some of the ancient aims and practices were, however, sustained in the debating societies of British universities and the departments of speech and public address in US colleges.

The ancient rhetoricians assumed that truth was absolute and separable from text. Many postmodernist critics and scholars, however see truth as relative and texts as self-contained objects whose truth is re-made by every reader. The ancients regarded discourse as dynamic, embodying an intention and a design fitted to an audience. Much as politicians and lawyers still see it (hence the weighting in favour of those entering politics from the law?).

Many present day literary critics, however, see discourse, and especially texts, as complete in themselves and distinct from their creators, the intention of the creators having reduced importance, or no importance at all if they are not shown in the text. The dynamic therefore lies not with the writer but with the reader, in the re-creation of meaning. The emphasis has accordingly been on structure, coherence and interpretation rather than on creation and the techniques of dissimulation that may accompany it, except insofar as these can be deconstructed to reveal a variety of possible interpretations. Even so, classical rhetoric survives. It has given shape to much of the western world’s inheritance of oracy and literacy.

Everyone who speaks and writes a western language, or any language influenced by the forensic and literary traditions of the west, is affected by it. Anyone who speaks in public or writes for professional purposes engages in the processes first listed in the five canons. (inventio, disposition, educatio, pronunciatio, memoria). In journalism and publishing, on radio and television, in the theatre and cinema, the old names may or may not be known, but the tools continue to be used.
Last Thursday the *Washington Post*’s Australian correspondent remarked to me that he was very concerned with the capacity of today’s cadets and graduates to analyse a press release beyond a page of text. His concern, he added, was greater than the fact the majority seem to be content to re-key what they have been sent by “PR flacks”. The real problem was that they appeared not to understand the real reason for the inclusion of the final words of the distributed item. The words, he said, that needed to be inculcated were simple and three; “for more information”.

The corollary is the reporter who fails to follow up on what may at first glance appear to be a legitimate report. The report contains complex statistical information and is most likely published by a bona fide organisation. Why, we may question would there be reason to follow up, or to analyse anything other than the data? In other words, anything outside the text. Such was the case recently when Flinders University of South Australia’s National Institute of Labour Studies Inc produced a working paper titled Employee Relations Indicators: Coal Mining and Other Industries Compared.

The paper claimed to examine whether there are major differences between industries on a range of employee relations indicators with particular reference to the coal industry. The report, published in June this year, was given some attention by the national press and a bit more attention by the local and regional press in areas where coal mining is the established industry. The report made various claims not least that … “in keeping with tradition, coal mining continues to have an extremely poor record when it comes to industrial disputation”.

In October a report produced by a Canberra consultancy, Tasman Asia Pacific, titled The Scope For Productivity Improvement in Australia’s Black Coal Industry was published. Commissioned by the world’s largest mining company it claimed to compare the productivity of Australian open cut black coal mines against international counterparts. What in fact the report proceeded to do, was compare the Powder River Basin in the US with its own Australian operations, including Hunter No 1 which is the subject of a complex industrial issue. The clue to understanding this report is that the geology of the Powder River Basin differs significantly to the Australian operations used in the comparison. It has fewer technical problems relating to productivity and uses vastly more modern technology in its face operations.

However, there is an even more important point to be made here. The second report used statistical information for its argument based on the Flinders University Study. The Flinders study used data from a survey which included nine coal mine employees, undertaken in the 1980s. Nine. No coherent, broad-based survey of employee relations in the coal mining industry - Australia’s largest exporter - has even been undertaken. What’s more, the Flinders Report, citing references which were mostly more than 20 years old, was also commissioned by the same mining company, Rio Tinto. Rio Tinto is the largest mining company in the world. Its Australian share price is around $16.10 and its is the ninth largest Australian company with market capitalisation of 9.2 billion dollars. Both these reports, boiled down and distributed as press releases by the company, found their way, unadulterated, into the national, provincial, regional and local press.

We could define this as the reporter being overwhelmed by “the study”. The study of course is a great way to have your information published with little concern that it will undergo detailed scrutiny. Take yesterday’s *Sydney Morning Herald* front page drop, the head for which claimed “climate mayhem ahead”. The report, on which the story was based, produced by an Australian-Japanese group comprising CSIRO and NIRD, was written up as “searing summer temperatures, severe flooding and mudslides will become common over vast tracts of North Asia, Latin America and Africa if carbon dioxide levels are not controlled within 50 years”. Thankfully the words “study warns” had been tacked to the head, to offer, one would assume, some sort of protection for the headline writer, if not the reporter.

In the same days’ newspaper in the business section, a story on MIM, Australia’s 49th largest company by market capitalisation, offers that it is defying the gloom of an expected coal industry price cut and in the second column added that the company’s Oaky Creek operations have had a strong turnaround in productivity since the company restructured the 180 strong underground “workforce”, replacing it with 60 “staff”. As with the front page story, the choice of words, the rhetoric, has been used in a specific fashion to produce a desired effect.

Now, as a public relations lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, these are exactly the tactics I would advise my undergraduate students to employee when they are earning six figure salaries within the mahogany halls of the corporation. I would also be able to advise them that today, it is all too easy to rely on the study, the press release, or the well polished chief executive speech to snow the reporter and get your employer on the front page of any national or metropolitan daily. I myself have been in the position of having an employer on the front page of the *SMH*, the only time it happened in the history of the organisation. And it was a positive piece.

My concern is that the ability of the reporter to report, objectively, in terms which take into consideration every aspect of the story required by the reader, is no longer available. Ownership and concern for the well-being of the stakeholder have combined to deny the newspaper the capacity to provide its readers with objective information.

The daily newspaper is no longer a record of sociopolitical events and issues. It is a product of economic expediency, rolling along on the political rhetoric of the “mum and dad shareholder”, the global electronic village and the desire to be seen to be competing with infotainment multi-media. The politics of the press is no longer the politics of the people. If we consider the big picture, I suppose the fact that News Corporation has recently hopped from number three to number one on the Australian Stock Exchange, with a market capitalisation of almost 27.8 billion dollars and a share price of $7.82, says it all.
While I may not agree with his argument I think it is important to close with a quote from Mark Davis who, in his recent book Gangland, makes interesting claims about generational control of the wider media which include the press and other cultural institutions. Davis writes that "There is a group of figures, born somewhere between the late 1930s and the early 1950s, who now dominate the media, who set the tone of the debate on popular social issues from feminism to education and multiculturalism. Over and above the sameness of the voices and faces who dominate the general run of popular commentary, they are institutions."

Davis goes on to write that he has been struck recently by the dearth of space available in the Australian media for people under forty, to present views and opinions. "Sure, there is plenty of room for the comical etiquette column or the lifestyle column but there are few places where younger people are allowed to have a serious opinion on anything other than youth issues, or if they are female, a woman's issue, or, if they are ethnic, an ethnic issue, articulated in a manner which is not anecdotal, comic or personal. It's as if people under the age of forty don't have credible opinions, such is their general invisibility in the media and their lack of access to a wide public."

What Davis fails to understand however, is that while his own discourse, published by Allen & Unwin, may have failed to gain the respect of the entrenched critics, at $16.95 it is possibly the best public relations handbook available to any newgen political animals keen to find their own voice and to begin analysing and questioning the political rhetoric of government and the newspaper proprietors who run them.

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Back to the Future: Preserving Today’s Electronic News and Entertainment for Tomorrow

Barbara Alysen

Readers perusing the list of papers given during this conference may detect a small but significant trend. The several papers which draw on textual analysis of media messages all concern themselves with the print media, even though it might be argued that television is the more influential medium. Without wishing to judge the motivations of my colleagues I believe the relative dearth of similar analysis, particularly the retrospective analysis, of television news and current affairs deserves closer consideration.

Today’s newspaper may be tomorrow’s fish and chips wrapper, but fifty or one hundred years from now researchers will still have ready access to that paper to see what it tells them about both the events of today and the process of news making itself. By contrast, as current policies stand, researchers can barely access the television news of a week ago - let alone that of previous decades. The repercussions of this have been addressed by Norwegian media scholar Hans Frederik Dahl who noted the relative ease of charting the institutional history of television news and the extreme difficulty of explaining the development of the news process. He asked:

"how did the news proper, the TV broadcasts, develop from day to day, gradually establishing its own formal rules and developing its news criteria? Unfortunately, this is a difficult question to answer. And I hardly need give you the reasons. We have no complete collection of records of the TV news broadcasts, not in any country as far as I know." (Dahl, 1995, np)

Yet Australian media researchers have been curiously silent about this situation and strangely lacking in curiosity as to its reasons.

Anyone who has researched in television in Australia would be aware that there is no Australian equivalent of the American Vanderbilt Television News Archives - which retains a library of every prime-time, network news bulletin since August 1968. Indeed, it would be very difficult for an Australian public collection to mirror the Vanderbilt system because, apart from the SBS news service, Australian lacks national news programs and, as desirable as it might be, it is hard to see any national collection collecting four prime-time programs from every state capital every night.

But for researchers who are interested in television news not just in terms of content but of context and process (meaning the way stories are constructed, the role of the reporter, the position of interviews within the package, the teasers and playoffs and so on), the difference is daunting. The main public repository for Australian television programs is the Canberra-based National Film and Sound Archive. The NFSA is not the only archive of Australian television material - the ABC and the Nine networks both maintain their own and the Australian Archives is the final repository for ABC material. Moreover, all television stations maintain in-house libraries.

Much of what goes to air here survives in those corporate archives and libraries. But those institutions exist, quite naturally, to serve in-house needs and most of their material is beyond the realistic reach of researchers and certainly beyond the reach of interested members of the public. So the television holdings of the National Film and Sound Archive comprise our national collection - housed in one place, publicly accessible and accountable to both depositors and the public.

In determining whether or not to acquire specific programs or material, the NFSA applies 'the loss principle', that is -

'if there is any reason of form, content or external association why the loss of a particular item would be regretted in the future, there is a case for preservation.' (Edmondson, 1991, 34)

Using this principle it seeks to acquire (among other material) -

- representative (both in terms of time of broadcast and style of program) samples of complete news broadcasts and current affairs programs from the range of stations Australia-wide
- news footage from TV news libraries as offered, on the basis that selection has already been carried out within stations
- individual news stories of historical, social, cultural significance (Edmondson, 1991, 44).

This policy, formulated in 1990, is the ideal. In fact, however, the national collection of news and current affairs television holdings was, between 1956 and 1989, almost entirely dependent on the second of the above selection criteria - donations. According to its 1995 database, the NFSA held 9,514 items of television news (most individual stories without presenter’s links) and 1,051 of television current affairs. Of these, only some ten per cent of the news items (904) could be viewed, since the rest were held only on preservation copies, which cannot be handled unnecessarily. Of the current affairs items, 553, more than half the collection, were held on both preservation and access copies.

In contrast to the development of television news in some other western nations, Australian television featured news programs from its start in 1956. In the NFSA’s collection there is one news item from 1956 (on the subject of an ‘American discussing the establishment of bases in Antarctica’). There are two items from each of 1957 and
1958 and six from 1959. The number of news items, broken down by year of broadcast, then fluctuates considerably, peaking at 1,055 in 1978 before plunging to just twenty-seven in 1983 and 1984 presumably because television newsrooms were switching from film to videotape and dumping film holdings but retaining tapes.

The source of these stories is also significant. The majority of early items are from NWS9, Adelaide and another major source is the Australian Information Service.

For documentary and program makers this material's utility is in its content. But for those of us interested in television as the history of its form or process, the lack of context surrounding these items such as newsreader's links, competing bulletins and so on is a particular problem.

Since 1989 the NFSA has collected television news by a sampling system whereby some 22 stations around the country provide recordings of between one and three weeks of their news each year in return for blank tape. In theory this means that there is at least one copy of every major story for the year, held within the context of a complete bulletin.

However, from a research perspective this method of acquisition means that we still cannot compare different treatments of the same story and on those nights when the station being sampled is a purely regional bulletin, as is the case with Imparja in Alice Springs, there may be no national stories acquired.

The other interesting point about this sampling program is that it does not include the ABC, although the NFSA would prefer that it did, and it does not include Pay TV's Sky News, so it reflects only the free-to-air channels and SBS.

Commencing in 1997, the NFSA aims to sample also a full day's broadcasts on participating radio and television stations twice yearly, so that programs can be preserved in context, complete with ads, back announces and so on.

Yet deposits of electronic material in the national collection remain entirely voluntary. The law requires that printed material be deposited in the National Library. But there is no such provision for electronic material even though UNESCO has been urging since about 1980 that its member states adopt such a system.

In 1995 the NFSA and the National Library argued, in a joint submission to the Copyright Law Review Committee, that Australia's legal deposit provisions should be updated 'to allow the collection and protection of published cultural material in all forms' and:

'That the definition of 'publication' in the revised Copyright Act be extended to include the concept of publication by transmission.' (NFSA & NLA, 1995, 2-3)

Were it ever to be adopted compulsory deposit would raise the political problem of who would pay for preservation copies of electronically-transmitted material since the options of taxpayer funded or broadcaster/producer funded would both meet resistance.

Even with legal deposit to back them archivists would still have to make very difficult selection decisions on what to keep of TV news and current affairs because of the cost of tape and storage. But it would give the NFSA the opportunity to retain, for example, more of shows like *Midday* of which it currently receives only one or two episodes a year, and which is often a measure of the way in which certain issues have permeated the pubic consciousness.

Acquiring a truly and historically representative sample of television material is one thing. Maintaining its physical integrity is another. When television began in Australia in 1956 a program could be transmitted one of only two ways, from film or live. If a program were live it might be recorded as a kinescope, a film recording shot from a monitor. Videotape was introduced to Australia in 1959 but kinescopes held on as a format for many years after the introduction of tape because they remained the one format certain to be accepted by any station no matter where or how small. The subsequent switch to videotape raised the question of how long tapes could be expected to survive, an issue which remains unsettled as the American Film Institute notes.

Estimates of the shelf life of videotape range from as low as 5 to 20 years, to as high as 100 or more years. However, since tapes are erasable for re-use, economic rather than archival considerations can often dictate the survival of any given program. (AFI 1997:4)

Many archivists would argue that the problem of the lifespan of videotapes is less significant than that of the machines on which to play them. The first videotape was two-inch 'quad' which has been obsolete since the 1980s. In the years since there has been a plethora of tape formats, both professional and domestic, from 1 inch open-reel, to U-matic cassette, to high-band BVU - to helical - to more one inch formats, from Betamax to VHS, to Betacam, Betacam SP, and now digital tape and disk. Each format change introduces new hardware. Most are mutually incompatible. Many, particularly quad, are very space-consumptive.

Optimists like to believe the digital era will settle these problems and that any moment now archives will be able to digitise their holdings, freeing subsequent transfers to each new generation of technology from the loss of quality which mars analogue transfers. But while that makes sense for newsroom operations it is not yet workable for archives, first because digital storage of audio and video signals is about the most expensive form of storage available. Secondly because digital formats are as prone to change and obsolescence as any other. (see Rothenberg, J, 1995) Thirdly because digital audio and video storage systems involve compressing the signal and the resultant deletion of some of the information available in the original and while this may be acceptable commercially it is...
not to archivists. Fourthly, archivists have more reason than most to worry about computer viruses.

If preserving existing television formats is problematic the emerging formats - those media which are transmitted via computer and combine text and streamed audio and video - promise to be even more so.

Thus far Australia lacks an online news service of the sophistication of the big US ones such as CNN and MSNBC, but it does contribute news to those services so perhaps we should start to see them as part of our media heritage. In any event we already have smaller-scale news or news-affiliated sites such as the ABC's online news service and sites for specific news or current affairs shows like those for Sunday and Business Sunday.

These are the current challenge for the national collection and they pose more questions than there seem to be answers. Questions such as how do you preserve the context of on-line sites with their hot links and constant updating? (Thus far the NFSA has had to rely on printing paper copies from Internet sites.)

While these questions occupy professional archivists they have attracted too little attention from media scholars despite the fact that lack of preservation of or access to audio-visual heritage is a loss we feel more keenly than most.

The recently published report of the Library of Congress on television and video preservation in the US noted that Education access remains largely unattainable for a variety of reasons including under funding in public archives, lack of descriptive cataloging and reference copies, copyright interests and very restrictive usage policies.

Scholars best qualified to judge the long-term research value of television and video materials are generally not given ample opportunity to participate in decision making and public and corporate archives on what will be saved and made available. (Television and Video Preservation, 1997, 12)

Hans Frederik Dahl put it more poetically and more bluntly:

'Consequently the history of the TV news is very hard to write. Imagine that - an extraordinary, important institution so scantily represented in the memory bank. The real and full importance of modern media may still be hidden for us. All the same we should do our utmost to preserve their heritage. One day that may turn out to be necessary - for staying human.' (Dahl, 1995, np)

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Defending the journalistic critic against the sledgehammer of corporatism

Tony Rees

I am a journalist. For 35 years I have plied my craft in newspapers and magazines in Australia and the United Kingdom. I have worked for most of the major Australian publishing groups and a couple in Fleet Street. And I have edited – or held senior editorial or management posts in – national, metropolitan, suburban and rural publications. It’s been a wonderful journey with some fabulous stopovers: editor-in-chief of the Manly Daily; assistant night editor of the London Sun; editor in chief of the Perth Daily News; assistant editor (news) of the Australian Women’s Weekly; deputy editor of Australian Playboy (not necessarily in that order); managing editor and creator of Robert Holmes a Court’s short-lived suburban newspaper empire. I don’t want to go the full Monty on my CV; just to establish that I’m a professional from the commercial world who has joined, relatively recently, the ranks of journalism educators.

When I became a lecturer I had two basic objects in mind: to expose to public view some of the mistakes I had made in the hope that our students – tomorrow’s practitioners – would learn from them; and to join in public debate about improving standards of journalistic practice. The first task was relatively easy: if your own journalistic education started with putting your foot in someone’s door, you know instinctively what NOT to teach them.

The second – improving standards of practice in the media at large – is proving more difficult. This, largely, is because television – particularly commercial television – has demonstrated that it is more than happy to play fast and loose with the truth in its coverage of news and current affairs. The motivator is ratings, which translate into profit. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with that, provided the quest for ratings does not swamp journalistic standards. However, I fear this is becoming the case, that the commercial consideration is the first consideration and ethical values are nice, but not necessary, decorations.

You will recall the Skase chase6 – in which Majorcan police ruthlessly hounded the fearless Channel 7 team off that idyllic Spanish island. Except they didn’t. The “hounding” was exposed by Stuart Littlemore1 as shots of traffic police in Barcelona. The Today Tonight crew had deliberately fabricated a story – an embarrassingly transparent example of the ratings motive outweighing the journalistic standard of truth.

I would like you to pause here to consider that, with all its imperfections, the craft of journalism at least has as its ideal the notion that truth is sacrosanct. In this it differs markedly from, say, the legal profession, which is indifferent to truth, or the practice of politics, which is to conceal it.

Jana Wendt rang a few bells when she delivered the Andrew Olle Media Lecture2 last month, pointing to the “Frontline” approach taken by some commercial television news and current affairs programs. “Principles,” she said, “like objectivity and fairmindedness have been replaced by cheap opinion and popular prejudices.” She asked, rhetorically: “Should the tidal wave of trivia and sometimes downright mendacity be allowed to bury our expectations of being told the truth? Do the tabloids and their television counterparts have to be this crude to make a quid?”

As a partly-reconstructed tabloid hack, I can speak with some authority on this subject. Ms Wendt is absolutely correct: the public does have a right to the truth. But who is going to insist on the truth being told?

The world of journalism in 1997 is a far from healthy place. More than 60 per cent of metropolitan print media is owned by a Rupert Murdoch-controlled company, commercial television is virtually in the hands of three networks and the owner of one of these is waiting in the wings to grab control of the Fairfax newspaper group; the rural and provincial press are dominated by two conglomerates; diversity of mainstream radio ownership is contracting; Bill Gates seems unassailable in his pursuit of international multimedia control. To add to the malaise, the Federal Government has brought the ABC – once a reliable bastion of ethical practice – to its knees.

Who is left to fight for what is left of journalistic standards? Who is going to stand up for members of the public who are badly dealt with by the media? While it can be argued that the press usually provide some avenue of reply for aggrieved readers via letters to the editor sections, and radio can lay claim to give a right of reply via talkback (though shock jocks reduce this mechanism to a parody), television does virtually nothing. If you are done over by Ray3, mauled by Witness4 or set up by 60 Minutes5, chances are, if you do not have clear grounds for legal action, any wrong done to you will remain unrighted unless the issue is taken up by Media Watch.

So we – the academic representatives of journalism – virtually by default have taken on the mantle of defenders of the faith. In the absence of a vigorous, diverse media it falls to us to draw the public’s attention to media excesses. Using traditional academic freedom to keep the bastards honest is a role I relish. But let me tell you: it is not an easy path. The pressures of corporatism in the tertiary sector are making insidious intrusions into our ability as academic journalists to assert moral authority over commercial media.

In August this year I wrote a letter to The Australian which was bluntly critical of Channel 7’s coverage of the Thredbo disaster on the day Stuart Diver was discovered alive under the rubble. My comments, within my area of

Journalism Education Association Conference, December, 1997
expertise as an employee of Murdoch, were:

Hearts across Australia raced at the pre-dawn news on Saturday that someone had survived the disaster at Thredbo, mine among them.

Then I tuned in to Channel 7's live coverage, and nearly threw up.

Here was the height of human drama – the existence of life when hope had all but expired – being dragged to the depths of mindless banality by a crew of commercial clodhoppers who might just as well have been compering a quiz show.

By their incomparably asinine observations these television bimbos and jimbos reduced a scene of ineffable piquancy to the level of a Monty Python farce. Their attempt to match sound to footage (with pauses for commercials, naturally) was a hideous travesty of journalism.

If they have nothing to say, they should shut up.

In accordance with the University's rules on publication it was signed "Tony Rees, Lecturer in Journalism, Murdoch University". My comments drew a reaction from John Rudd, Channel 7's news director, who spoke by phone to the Vice-Chancellor, then sent a two-page memorandum to me, copy to the Vice-Chancellor, who was on record as stating that "it is important for universities to permit the widest possible debate on all matters of social and academic importance".

I was surprised, as were other Murdoch teaching and research staff, to receive, soon afterwards, a copy of a Senate resolution requiring all Murdoch academics to submit to "approval" by their Executive Dean before submitting an opinion for publication. The censorship resolution was not on the published agenda of the Senate meeting, which was attended by the Chancellor, former Federal Minister Fred Chaney, and contradicted the long-standing Senate policy encouraging academics to engage in public debate. Copies of my letter to the Australian, and of a letter to The West Australian by a law academic which I am told annoyed the Equal Opportunity Tribunal commissioner, Nicholas Hasluck, QC, were distributed to Senate members.

There was an immediate and universal reaction. Apart from the ethical considerations of bureaucratic censorship of academics, the practical shortcomings of such a policy were self-evident. What would happen if the Dean was in the dunny when one of his academics was asked to comment on radio? Even if he wasn't, were we expected to interpose him between the interviewer and the interviewee? Were we supposed to create a new form of five-second delay so that the Dean could approve the academic's response to an interviewer's question? The absurdity of the Vice-Chancellor's action rapidly became apparent.

Following approaches from the Academic Council, the Vice-Chancellor submitted to the Senate an amended policy restoring academics' right to comment publicly on matters in their area(s) of expertise and withdrawing the requirement to gain approval before publication. Specifically, the Senate resolved that "a member of staff writing or speaking publicly in a professional or expert capacity may identify herself or himself by her or his University appointment or qualifications and may for that purpose use the name of the University".

The resolution added: "The University expects that staff will maintain professional standards when they associate themselves with its name in public statements." No definition of "professional standards" was given. A rider recommended that "any member of staff who is unsure about whether or not (sic) his or her planned public comment meets the policy should seek the advice of the Executive Dean or Office/Unit Head". This is censorship by stealth and it appoints heads of department, irrespective of their own ethical views, to a conspiracy of blandness, a corporate attempt to stifle controversy and vigorous debate. It means that an academic should steer away from public controversy.

Is this what universities are, or should be, about? My criticism of Channel 7 resulted in a conversation between a commercial television executive and the chief executive officer of my university. Neither Mr Rudd nor Professor Schwartz has appraised me of the content of their discussions. However, the tenor of the Vice-Chancellor's only letter to me on this subject indicates that he disapproves of my action. In the vernacular of journalism, he has given me a bollocking for offending Channel 7. He has avoided the central issue – whether Channel 7's coverage of Thredbo merited my criticism.

Did Mr Rudd suggest that Murdoch might miss out on publicity if it allowed radical academics to question the propriety of Channel 7's editorial approach? Did he ask Professor Schwartz to rein me in? Did Professor Schwartz give him any commitment? I don't know.

But Mr Rudd's point of view is indicative of an attitude which is in danger of becoming the prevailing behavioural paradigm in television journalism: that might is right. The bully seeks to overcome his opponent not by rationality or reason but by the threat of using the power of his publicity machine to cow the voice of the seeker after truth. I believe that academic freedom – the right fearlessly to express a view in one's area of expertise – must be above the commercial pressures which increasingly assail the world of tertiary education. Not to do my utmost, as a journalist using journalistic wordpower, to defend journalistic standards against the best efforts of Mr Rudd and his ilk is unthinkable.

I realise that the polemic I am delivering to you today is unlikely to endear me to the Vice-Chancellor of Murdoch University. A friend described my intention to air the matter publicly as "not a good career move". Well, I can live with that. What I cannot live with is the notion that we – the educators of the next generation of journalists
Defending the journalistic critic against the sledgehammer of corporatism should compromise on ethical standards and condone bad journalistic practice.

I believe passionately that we should — we MUST — fight for a right of reply for those unfairly dealt with by the media (though it's a bit late for Benny Mendoza⁸). It is our duty to speak out publicly and fearlessly if sections of the media indulge in unprofessional behaviour. We must stand up against the sledgehammer of corporatism.

If we don't, who will?

⁰ The Channel 7 current affairs program, *Today Tonight*, broadcast on November 11-12, 1996, a story about the former media entrepreneur, Christopher Skase, fighting moves to extradite him from Spain to explain to Australian courts matters surrounding the collapse of his company, Quintex. During the segment, the reporter gave the false impression via footage of police that his crew were under pressure from authorities to leave Majorca.


⁴ Current affairs program, Channel 7.

⁵ Current affairs program, Channel 9.

⁶ Public Comment by University Staff, published by the Registrar's Office, Murdoch University, and signed by Andrew Bain, Acting Secretary, Senate.

⁷ Extract from Senate minutes, October 6, 1997; point 5: Academic Council.

⁸ Benny Mendoza committed suicide three days after *A Current Affair* accused him, on August 18, 1997, of business malpractice.

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BLOOD ON THE MARBLE: A study of the discourse of law and order articulated by the Australian print media at the time of the Parliament House “riot” in August 1996.

Katrina Mandy Oakham

Australia awoke on August 20, 1996 to be told by its quality newspapers that the country had just witnessed a major political moment, a bloody riot culminating in the storming of Parliament House.

It would be very easy to present an analysis of that coverage in *The Age* and *The Australian* newspapers of that day as yet another example of the capitalist press attacking the oppressed masses. To do so however would be to make the mistake of so many academic analyses of news making which appear to work with, what at best can be described as, implicit conspiracy theories.

Studies of news production often reproduce a standard set of dichotomies:
• Academic definitions and criteria versus professional definitions and criteria
• Covert conspiracy theories versus adamant declarations of autonomy
• Notions of compliance versus notions of resistance

This case study aims to bring about some form of reconciliation of these polarities. This paper will present a content analysis of *The Age* and *The Australian* newspapers on the day following the “riot”. I intend to follow up this paper with more research talking to those actually involved in producing these particular news products. In doing this I intend to recognize Tiffen’s injunction that:

“Understanding the institutional processes of news production is a prerequisite for understanding what news means (Tiffen 1989:4)

If this is not to be another conspiracy theory then what will this paper argue? News organizations and the journalists within them obviously work with a vision of the social order they report on, or in the words of Ericson et al:

“As an active agency of social control, stability and change news representations provide people with preferred visions and versions of social order. (Ericson et al 1991:10)

Fisher and Hartley argue that these news representations be accepted not as “one way of seeing but as the way of seeing”. (Ericson et al 1991:10)

This paper will argue that newspaper coverage in this instance did reinforce a conservative discourse of law and order, interwoven with moral outrage, and ultimately confirmed a vision of the existing social order. Ericson et al argue that the discourse of news, like it could be argued the discourse of law and order, deals with three fundamental aspects of that order.

Moral evaluation

In this particular case study the evaluation was clear. The primary definers of the situation, supported by media images, declared this action to be “unAustralian and ugly” (*The Age* 20/8/1996:1)

Further John Howard is quoted as describing the event as being “morally unacceptable” (*The Australian* 20/8/1996:3)

A conception of procedure

In both the reporting and commentary in these two papers the reoccurring theme is the difference between “proper” peaceful protest and violent protest.

Addresses hierarchies

The primary definers are the Prime Minister supported by the forces of law and order. “Oppositional” definers such as Kim Beazley and Jennie George are quoted in their support of the definitions given by the primary definers. There are no genuinely “alternative” visions given.

The Context

Clearly the events of August 19, 1996 occurred at a time in Australian history when issues of stability and change were on the agenda with a new government moving to implement new policies. Media analysts had dubbed the 1996 election result as a vote for change but ironically a party promising a return to the unchanging values was elected. As a society the analysts told us we were fed up with too much change and so we voted for another change!

As Scheingold argues law and order can “become a symbol of resistance to unwelcome changes of all sorts” and “The politics of law and order thrive only together with a more extended sense of social malaise.” (1984:82)

In beginning this content analysis it is important to take account of what Grabosky and Wilson 1989 established, that is, that news agendas do differ according to the perceived place of the news organisation in the market place. In beginning an analysis of *The Age* and *The Australian* it is useful to note Tiffen’s 1989 caricature of these particular types of newspapers:

“smaller, predominantly middle class circulations; rely on classified advertising as a major source of revenue;
have news priorities which emphasize international news, politics, business and major social institutions, present news more soberly and have a serious conception of their role, perhaps seeing themselves as a ‘paper of record.” (1989:16)

The Analysis

The Age: Page One

The major headline on the page reads “Parliament besieged”. Clearly the suggestion here is that we are not talking about just a physical structure, but Parliament and government is besieged. By broadening out the reference the significance is amplified. This incident is not just about an attack on a building, but on an icon of our democracy.

Moral oppositions are set up in the strapline on the same page.

“They had come to Canberra in their thousands to protest peacefully against the Howard government.
But within hours an angry mob had stormed Parliament House leaving a trail of destruction.”

“They”, a group of people safely undefined, are following proper procedures of peaceful protest, which is then sharply contrasted with the angry mob storming and leaving a trail of destruction. The achievement for the subeditor may lie in the inclusion of three cliches in one sentence!

Underneath the major headline, the blocked sub heads have the Prime Minister defining the action as unpatriotic - “UnAustralian says Howard”.

The second headline however offers reassurance that there is immediate and harsh punishment for those threatening the Australian law and order, that is “49 arrested.”

The accompanying photograph sets up marked contrasts. The angry bloodied mob has their arms outstretched in strong, aggressive gestures. Their mouths are open and they are dishevelled.

The central character in the foreground has long hair, an earring and other signifiers of defiance. On his shirt there is another oppositional signifier, the Aboriginal flag. He has donned all the motifs of the outsider.

By contrast the upholder of law and order, the police officer, is clean-shaven and significantly his hands are in his pockets. His posture is non-aggressive and non-threatening in his defence of the proper order. By looking at later versions of this same photograph we see that other officers surrounding him have been cropped out to make him look more like the John-Wayne-type hero taking on the angry mob.

Moving on to the body of the report we find the cliches continue to fly. Within the copy opposing sides “clash” and a shop is “trashed”. The use of the vernacular here is interesting and seems to jar with the more conservative house style of the newspaper. Clearly however the use of street talk sets these perpetrators in their place on the street, with the gutter not that far below.

The Australian: Page One

Beginning with the main headline of “Rioters storm Parliament” again there is a sense of Parliament being more than just a physical building. It could be argued that the photograph used here is not as provocative as the one used by The Age on its front page, but the rioters are still pictured with their arms outstretched. They can also be seen to be unshaven with long hair and wearing woolly hats, the modern symbol of misplaced idealism.

Inside the building the symbols of authority, law and order are seen to be on the defence in the face of aggression. The perspective of looking through cracked glass from the outside suggests who is on the “outside” of this symbolic order. The second photograph on the page, an aerial shot of the protest, gives an indication of the size of the “mob” invoking connotations of the masses. Clearly visible at the left of the photograph are the white pillars of Parliament House, signifiers of pure authority amidst a “sea of protest.”

The intro to the page one story identifies the “mob” for us, the folk devils of the nineties, “thousands of unionists, students and Aboriginal activists stormed Parliament in one of the nation’s most violent political protests.”

In the body of the copy the rioters are described as having “swarmed” and “stormed”, the use of these verbs reinforcing notions of mass movement but movement with malicious intent and consequences.

The Riot in Perspective

Before tripping into the quagmire of conspiracy it is important to point out that a careful reading of the reporting does reveal some efforts to put this “riot” into some sort of perspective.

Both newspapers give figures on the ultimate cost of the riot with figures ranging from $75,000 to $90,000 which, when compared to say one week’s travel expenses by Mal Colston, give a more realistic account of the damage.

It is also reported that the “riot” lasted only two hours and that “debris was quickly cleared.” The Australian also attempted to put the incident into an historical perspective giving details of previous incidents in the mid 80s, in 1992 and in 1994 when there had been “attacks” on Parliament, as well as reminding readers of the logger’s blockade of 1993-1994 and the Aboriginal FENT Embassy protest in the mid 70s.

Moments of Resistance

For those who know where to look there are also moments in the coverage where journalists emerge as workers with workers’ sympathies who managed to slip some mischievous defiance into their copy with obvious support from sympathetic subs.

Gabrielle Chan in The Australian’s coverage quotes a tourist caught up in the event who is a professor from
the defence academy of Japan. Professor Kamata is quoted as saying:

"I also heard someone say John Howard is a bastard but maybe I don't understand the nuance or the delicate meaning of that." (1996:2)

There is also a quote from the Australian Federal Police who are convinced that the riot was planned well in advance and how did they know that?

"A large number of people turned up carrying things like paint that indicated that they had been planning something all along." (1996:3)

The messages are clear - John Howard is a bastard and the Australian Federal Police are less than competent!

Themes

The themes, which emerged from the coverage by these two newspapers, can be summed up as

- The supremacy of a consensus form of morality and authority
- Punishment and primacy of law and order
- Notions of the public sphere and what is acceptable in that public sphere

Conclusion:

What was interrogated here was why people would behave in this way not what would cause it. What has been focussed on is "troublesome persons" (that is students, workers, unionists, Aboriginal activists) not the troublesome structures (industrial relations legislation).

Young reminds that identification is always a doubled process:

"the good are identified with; the evil are identified against." (1996:119)

It is also important to avoid any implication that this identification process is merely imposed upon the readers as passive dupes as Windschuttle argued media images and reporting always has a "cognitive fit with reality; in other words they accord with the real experiences of people." (1988:296)

There is also resolution in this coverage namely the reassertion of the rule of law and the power of the state and what is acceptable in terms of public morality. Finally this case study shows in the words of Negrine that the media will always only supply "incomplete fragments of a complex situation." (1989:36)

Incomplete though they may be, we cannot ignore the role that journalists play in what Kirkhom describes as the "articulation of our time" (1990:6) and further the Gramscian insights that such articulations are crucial in winning consent to new hegemonic discourses. Study must also continue of what Kirkhorn so nicely identified as "journalistic reflexes" (1990:12). It is these reflexes that he argues impose on the "universe of discourse limitations as severe as those resulting from censorship." (Kirkhorn 1990:12) Only through the continued scrutiny of journalistic practice and procedures will this genuinely reflexive knowledge emerge.

This paper then points to the future research task for journalism as it cements its place in the academy. Future analysis may use tools borrowed from sociology; cultural studies, semiotics but this will not be a problem as long as such research makes every effort to incorporate the journalistic voice and perspective.

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The Media & Indigenous Australians Project: Time to Act

Lynette Sheridan Burns

Australia's emerging image as a racist nation has been widely condemned in Asia, the Pacific and by its own people. A perceived lack of action on the findings of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADIC) is one area singled out for criticism. Few could forget Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSIC) Commissioner Mick Dodson's passionate plea for justice, televised internationally in November 1996, when he asked "Where has the $400 million gone? Where the bloody hell is it? What did you do with it, why are our people still dying? Because you people aren't doing what you are supposed to be doing and the media ought to be calling them out?"

The Media & Indigenous Australians Project is an initiative arising from RCADIC (Recommendation 207) which aimed to improve media reporting by providing journalism graduates with a sound working knowledge of Indigenous culture and issues. The project, a joint consultancy between the University of Newcastle and Charles Sturt University, will provide all Australian universities with 15 weeks of curriculum materials for use in fundamental aspects of journalism education. The materials, which were trialed at several universities during 1997, apply a problem-based approach to learning because, it is argued, it encourages self-reliance, problem-solving, cooperation and critical self-reflection, which are important professional skills for journalists.

Background

In the findings of the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCADIC), the role of the media was found to be significant. In his final report, the Commissioner, Elliot Johnson QC, found that Indigenous people believed they were mostly presented as 'problems' in media reporting. He described media reporting as tending to focus on 'the negative', such as crime or the financial failure of Indigenous organisations, at the expense of individual and community achievements.

A survey of Indigenous Australians implemented by the National Indigenous Media Association of Australia (NIMAA) in 1997 shows that little has changed in Indigenous perceptions of mainstream media. Respondents to the survey, carried out at 20 locations around Australia (NIMAA 1997), felt that Indigenous people continue to be portrayed as 'dole bludgers, drunks, park dwellers, lazy, unclean, uneducated and sponging off government handouts' (NIMAA 1997:8). Sixty per cent of the 184 respondents felt that the media portrayal of Indigenous people was negative, illustrated by an emphasis on feuding in remote communities, crime in cities and Pauline Hanson's views on Indigenous people and matters. The majority of respondents described a lack of recognition in the media about Indigenous community achievements and individual successes. They felt there was not enough positive coverage about Indigenous people in everyday life throughout Australia and what there was tended to focus on high profile sports people such as 'our' Cathy Freeman (NIMAA 1997:9).

Few could forget Social Justice Commissioner Dodson's passionate plea for social justice, in November 1996, at a press conference to mark the release of a report on the implementation of the RCADIC recommendations. His comments, which drew attention to the $400 million he said had already been spent in response to RCADIC, were reported internationally, yet only one of 16 major daily Australian print news reports on his comments (The Age, 26 November, 1996) mentioned his direct criticism of the media. Despite a generally sympathetic portrayal of the nationwide shame of Indigenous deaths in custody, news reports tended to focus upon the inaction of politicians and government institutions and ignore the obligation on the media itself to act.

Another of the Royal Commissioner's recommendations specifically addresses the role of individual journalism educators in Australia. The Commissioner recommended that all institutions providing journalism courses ensure that courses contain a significant component relating to Indigenous issues and perspectives, 'thereby reflecting the social context in which journalists work' (207 a). The recommendation is premised on the fact that the majority of journalists working in the mainstream news media have little knowledge or direct experience of Indigenous culture or concerns (Eggerking 1996:21). The Royal Commissioner's intention with regard to this recommendation could not be more transparent. The recommendation carries the imputation that if journalism educators don't act on it, it is because they can't or won't. Hartley (1997:7) argues that the imperative is great.

"...It might be that reporting of race in Australia is the single most challenging issue to journalism in this country; and one that demands that the practice be reformed."

As a direct result of the Recommendation 207 in the RCADIC report, the then Minister for Education, Employment and Training, Simon Crean, announced a project to provide curriculum materials to University journalism courses that would seek to meet the objectives of the recommendation. This strategy, the Media and Indigenous Australians Project has resulted in the development of 15 learning modules, some of which have been trialed at Australian universities during 1997. The $190,000 project, coordinated by Chris Lawe Davies of the University of Queensland, is overseen by a reference group of representatives from journalism education, media employers, DEETYA, Indigenous organisations and the media union (MEAA). The reference group, chaired by Professor Marcia Langton, sought public tenders for the MIAP curriculum design before awarding the consultancy
to a group made up of Lynette Sheridan Burns and Paul Scott of The University of Newcastle, Kitty Eggerking of Charles Sturt University and Lester Bostock, an independent Indigenous media consultant.

The reference group also commissioned the NIMAA survey of Indigenous views on the media as part of the Media and Indigenous Australians Project. Preliminary feedback on the materials suggests that they are a "informative, provocative and challenging" addition to existing programs. In her report, NIMAA Print Policy Officer, Ms. Katrina Newton, found that by using the materials, 'students will graduate with an informed understanding of Indigenous people and will be equipped to give fair, educated and informed reports on Indigenous issues' (NIMAA 97:1).

Academics who made use of the materials in semester one 1997 have been similarly supportive. Stephen Stockwell, of Griffith University, praised "the oblique exposure to Indigenous issues that allows students to inform themselves". (Sheridan Burns 1997:2) "This is exciting stuff that is improving my own teaching practice", he added. Kim Lockwood, Editorial Training Manager for Herald & Weekly Times Ltd, has been similarly supportive and has agreed to use some of the materials with the 1998 intake of cadet journalists on The Age and Herald-Sun in Melbourne.

The brief specified that the consultant apply problem-based learning pedagogies to the development of 15 weeks of curriculum materials.

Problem Based Learning

Problem based learning (PBL) is an approach to teaching, learning and curriculum design that offers students an answer to the questions "why do we need to learn this and what does this have to do with the real world?" (Anderson & Biddle 1975:96). At its most fundamental level, PBL is an instructional method characterised by the use of problems as a context for students to learn problem solving skills. It demands creative, lateral thinking to specific tasks - this reflects the context in which journalists work on a day to day basis. According to Albanese and Mitchell (1993:52) who published a meta analysis of PBL, it allows students to explore actual cases of increasing complexity commensurate with their developing understanding of basic principles. Jackson and Prosser also found that PBL better prepares students for applying learning to new situations.

The PBL format applied to MIAP's objectives provides a structured opportunity for students to engage contextual issues in journalism practice. These issues include matters pertaining to representation, cultural value systems, dominant media discourses and the influence of workplace culture on the work of individual journalists.

The MIAP materials consist of learning modules designed to be undertaken by students individually or in small groups and all revolve around journalistic activities such as reporting, interviewing, research etc. Students undertake these investigations outside of class time in small groups and report their group observations and reflections either to a larger class group or in a written submission as part of assessment. For example, the introductory research module in the MIAP materials requires students to work in small groups to conduct library research into a local Indigenous community as the basis of a background news report. Students pool and evaluate their findings as a small group but each writes their own story, allowing for individual assessment of their work. Students attempting this assignment may find there is a lack of material available, but this in itself may be a valuable learning experience. Further, it may be argued that this cooperative approach to problem solving reflects the small team workplace and collegial culture experienced by graduates in media workplaces.

A feature of the materials is that the teaching notes provide the structure and process for achieving learning objectives. PBL's focus on process allows for content to be easily changed, while the meta learning outcomes remain constant. The tasks themselves can easily be modified, adapted or interchanged on an annual or semester basis. This allows for maximum flexibility in terms of the topical nature of the tasks undertaken by students and their relevance to the students and the area in which they study. For example, the MIAP materials were easily adapted in trials at the University of Newcastle in 1997 to incorporate reflection on that city's bicentennial celebrations and its relationship with Indigenous people.

Each individual module also simultaneously addresses one or more key issues in the portrayal of Indigenous issues including land rights, cultural sensitivity, stereotyping, lack of knowledge of Indigenous histories, Indigenous value systems, exclusion of Indigenous people from dominant discourse and racism. For example, Advanced Sub-Editing requires students working in print or broadcast mediums to negotiate ethical and cultural issues in the reporting of grief while also engaging the challenge of editing together a single report from a variety of sources.

Five of the modules are introductory in nature while the remaining ten modules offer scenarios with the potential to be offered at intermediate or advanced levels. All the materials engage fundamental topics in journalism education and training and are intended to form part of the general instructional program, not marginalised into a separate Indigenous unit. Just as Henningham (1994:90) argued that educators who consign ethics to the sidelines are sending a negative message to students, the Media and Indigenous Australians Project is predicated on the belief that students and or cadet journalists will rate the importance of understanding Indigenous perspectives ("We do Aborigines in Week 6 in second year") in proportion to the relative attention given to it as part of a journalism or cadet training program.

Some academics have expressed concern that the MIAP materials simply 'would not fit' into an already overcrowded curricula or have resisted the adoption of PBL pedagogies. The authors argue that because the majority of the materials cover core areas of journalism education found in all courses, they can be used to substitute
Conclusion

Indigenous Australians are entitled to ask where the $400 million has gone. The Media and Indigenous Australians Project is part of the answer. It is rarely disputed that the media plays an integral role in forming, shaping and changing attitudes and perceptions. It is also rarely disputed that issues relating to representation are nearly always complex and our personal understanding of the world has been informed by our upbringing, our friends, our cultural beliefs and representations of people and cultures made through the media. To bring about equity in the representation of Indigenous people and issues, non-Indigenous Australians need to ask themselves what they ‘know’ about Indigenous people and question how they came to know it. Equally, they might ask themselves what they ‘don’t know’ and why they don’t know it. This is no time for excuses, passive resistance or malicious compliance on the part of those who provide journalism education and training. Henningham (1994:93) asked whether inadequacies in Australian media standards are related to a weak journalism education sector. Echoing the adage that the role of journalism is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, Herbert (1997:7) argues, via film actor Humphrey Bogart, that it is the element of social responsibility that makes journalism a profession.

It may be argued if journalism educators are not interested in journalism that serves the public better, they become apologists for the weaknesses of current practice. Rather than simply training students and cadets to emulate flawed workplace practices, our graduates must at least be able to stand back and see what it is they are doing, and why are they doing it. Their capacity for critical self-reflection is vital in this. If there are those among journalism educators in Australia who shrink from their obligations and responsibilities in preparing the media of the 21st Century, they too need to be aware of what they are doing. Neither is MIAP an exercise in ‘political correctness’ or inverse ‘racism’ (Plater 1992:30). The materials are based on an acknowledgment that free speech is fundamental to a democratic society and that diversity of opinion is highly valued. However, the right to free speech is qualified in its application throughout the world and must be balanced against the rights of those being reported to be represented fairly.

In her evaluation of the MIAP materials, the NIMAA Print Policy Officer concluded that they were ‘a step in the right direction towards reconciliation for Australia’ (Newton 1997:2). She also notes that the success of the project is dependent upon the support of the people who provide journalism education and training.

‘It should be reinforced that the success of this material is solely dependent on the educator ... if they are receptive to the curriculum and are willing to go beyond their backyard to explore the opportunities for their students, then the curriculum will be a success’ (NIMAA 1997:2)

The Royal Commissioner has told us as journalism educators very clearly what we must do. The time to act is now. If we do not act to improve the reporting of Indigenous people and issues, it can only be because there is a lack of will or the power to make it happen.

Note: At the 1997 Annual General Meeting of the Journalism Education Association, members voted to endorse the introduction of the materials in Australian journalism programs and invited the authors to provide feedback to the 1998 JEA Conference regarding take up and use of the curriculum.

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Lynette spent more than a decade as a journalist on various Sydney metropolitan dailies before moving to the Hunter Valley where her work was acknowledged with three consecutive Prodi Awards for Journalism. She has maintained her professional associations through freelance work as an editor and publication designer, and through her role as Cadet Lecturer for The Newcastle Herald. Lynette has been Head, Communications and Media since 1996 and Journalism Coordinator since 1992. Lynette's most recent publications have addressed the development of new teaching methods and the use of problem based learning (PBL) in journalism education. She is currently engaged in a DEETYA-funded consultancy to develop journalism curriculum materials.
First, I would like to quote a distinguished British editor, Arthur Christiansen, who voiced what many of us involved in daily journalism feel about our lives:

Towards the end of his long career, Christiansen wrote: "I have never got over the feeling that I am not really a good craftsman, and that the next 24 hours will find me out."

His words encapsulate the feeling that many of us in daily journalism have about the decisions we have to make on the run during the rush hour, but I think it's also interesting that he writes about his job as a craft.

Craft: The dictionary definition denotes skill, cunning, guile, art, trade.

When I started out as a cadet quite a few years ago, what we were doing, according to the senior people on our newspapers, was in their view a craft. And that craft was the use of words.

I can remember endless debates in pubs, the old journo's club and around many a subs' desk about the meaning of words and when to use the right ones — infer and imply, convince and persuade, enormity, refute and rebut, and even the dreaded fulsome — the list goes on. It was a field day for pedants.

This, I might add, was a time when a journalist with tertiary qualifications was an oddity, and that our training was on the job, soaking up the experience of our senior colleagues, usually from high blood pressured chiefs of staff shouting across the newsroom, or from a harassed chief sub, or in after-hours discussion in said pubs.

Now we like to think of ourselves as professionals — as we should. And for this we can thank the changes that have occurred in society over the past few decades, and the colleges and universities that are now sharpening the quality of young people eager to get a start in the media.

Eight out of 10 of the young people who join the Daily Telegraph, The Australian and The Sunday Telegraph now have a degree of one sort or another related in some way to their future career. They are bright and ambitious, but probably not quite as resourceful, initially anyway, as we street kids were. But you have, in journalism courses, started them on the learning process.

And as we in the industry know, the learning process never ends. And the changes in our industry never end.

I have been in this business quite a long time and have seen many changes in how we view our role in society.

Fortuitously for me, one of my former editors wrote about these changes so elegantly in yesterday's 50,000th edition of the Herald (where I spent most of my years) on how the press survived the onslaught of television, its pictures and immediacy in relating the big events of our times.

This is John Douglas Pringle, a terrific editor:

'Most serious newspapers, including the Herald (and here I might interpose The Australian and even the Telegraph, which I think is a serious tabloid) have found the answer in comment. CP Scott's famous dictum, 'Comment is free, but facts are sacred,' which was never really possible, has long been abandoned. Today not only political and foreign correspondents but almost all journalists, are permitted, and often encouraged, to give their opinions on what has happened. I have no quarrel with that, providing readers remember that there was, after all, a grain in CP Scott's phrase — for opinions are not facts, though one hopes they are based on facts. But the freedom allowed journalists has encouraged many young men and women to become journalists.

The standard of writing has improved immeasurably. All the quality papers in Australia have correspondents of outstanding ability and judgment . . . '

Pringle continues:

'I think there is another function which newspapers are admirably able to perform: the task of explanation. In this century the world has become steadily more complicated. Many of the questions which bother people are exceedingly complex and difficult to understand. Economics is the obvious example, but there are countless others: global warming, space exploration and the origins of the universe. (and I would personally add here Mabo and Wik). What is the best way to educate children? What is the right balance between crime and punishment? Journalists who become experts in a subject and have the skill to explain it in clear simple language are of great value.'

Having been the cadet training manager at News Limited for just over two years, I will confine most of my remarks to the education policies of our organisation, which it seems to me in all areas other than journalism — management, advertising, marketing, circulation etc — training is a serious and continuous process aimed generally at technically improving performance.

With journalists however, in my limited experience, the training task is much harder, and this comes about because most journalists, by their natures and personalities and the hours they work, can be the very devil to instruct.

Here I might tell you how we select and train our young journalists.
To become a cadet, one has to join our organisation as a copyperson, that is an editorial support person to sort mail and faxes, answer phones on the news desk, do library research for journalists or get involved in some aspect of our internet operations. It also includes the coffee run, buying the fags and manning the dreaded radio room.

Just becoming a copyperson is very competitive as it is the first rung on the ladder to becoming a graded journalist via a cadetship. For example, about 150 young people will be sitting for our next exam, hoping to be short listed for perhaps six or seven vacancies that might occur some time in the new year.

Most of these people will be graduates in one of a number of disciplines — media studies, journalism, arts, arts/law, economics, political studies — the range is quite wide. We have no preferential policy for taking on graduates at this rank but it seems these days many young people wish to get a degree before setting out on their careers.

Where possible we try to mix in a few newcomers straight from the HSC, but we then encourage them to undertake tertiary study part time, and later on there are some financial incentives to encourage them to do this. Therefore by the time these people join us they have already broadened their learning, sometimes in journalism, sometimes not. This process brings to us a group of very bright young people who are clearly ambitious to move into print journalism to make their mark.

All copy people are encouraged to write for our papers on a voluntary basis. Well, they don’t need much encouragement as a good selection of published stories is of terrific value when the panel of editors comes to select their new cadets. And when resources permit, we conduct training sessions for copy people, mainly on news writing, and they are also free to attend regular cadet training sessions. We also start them out in shorthand.

The editors select their new cadets, through interviews, twice a year — usually six or seven each time.

The new cadets then enter a four-week induction training scheme which covers such hands-on subjects as news writing, softer writing, (unfortunately these days we also have to cover the basics of grammar), interviewing, ethics and a little bit of lighter stuff such as film reviewing.

Our lecturers include senior people such as department heads in our three papers. Other parts of the program include media law, especially defamation and contempt, stock exchange and property searches and similar things presented by professionals.

During their cadetship period, we also hold regular classes for trainees on subjects specific to our own newspapers’ needs as well as to broaden their knowledge of the industry in which they are working, and their part in it. These are the basics.

Just a few examples: We had David Williamson in for a workshop on drama and film criticism; how to conduct a death knock; quite a few sessions on the court system and court reporting; how to cover bushfires without getting trapped; how to use Freedom of Information legislation effectively; Ethics; newspaper design; advances in communication technology; the political systems, federal and state; the jargon of economics, and so on.

What we are trying to achieve here is a well-rounded reporter, for once you have good reporting skills, that is you can get a head full of facts, sift through them and present them in an engaging way — and quickly — you can then claim to be a journeyman or journeywoman journalist ready for almost any strand of newspaper work in news, features, sport, finance, arts etc that might appeal to you.

Training of the junior graded journalists is less formal.

We do, of course, send them to regular media law courses, and classes are organised for those who wish to move into production fields such as sub editing and design. When resources permit we also conduct workshops in more advanced writing for these younger people.

In addition a handful are attending tertiary courses part time, and a couple full time, in disciplines related to the strand of journalism they have embarked upon, be it education, the environment, science and so on. In these cases we help with fees and the cost of materials scaled on the quality of their results.

News Limited being what it is — a pretty large organisation — also allows us scope for exchanges of journalists for periods up to three months. We have, or have had, talented journalists from Fleet Street and the US joining our papers on short-term assignments, with reciprocal arrangements for our own people to enhance their own career paths, and we see this is a valuable learning process.

We have also examined, and are considering, sending talented people to short courses in the United States. Most US institutions do not provide short courses or summer schools in journalism. However two notable ones — the Poynter Institute in Florida and Columbia University do, covering such subjects as computer-assisted journalism, listening to your community (ie civic journalism), news research, ethical decision-making, opinion writing, new journalism, humour, informational graphics and advanced design and colour, among other things.

These are subjects our own institutions might consider offering as post graduate studies, or even short courses for the many older, but committed journalists who have not had the benefit of life on the campus. If they are already offered, I apologise for not knowing about them.

Janice Withnall mentioned to me that I might also talk about training and education for senior journalists. If you would like to prepare a programme for training Piers Akerman, Paul Kelly, Paddy McGuinness or perhaps Philip Adams, please let me know about it.
As a relative newcomer to journalism education, I thank you for having me here today, and I look forward to listening to your views in this session.

However I do have one more quote. This from Mungo MacCallum, (young Mungo’s grandfather I guess), who was a Sydney Uni Vice Chancellor during the 1920s. After pressure from the journalists’ union, he was reluctant to establish a journalism diploma course at Sydney, saying that a journalist ought to be a graduate in the “faculty of things in general.”

And that, I think, about sums us up.

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*Graham Stevenson is a cadet trainer at News Limited.*
Journalism and Lifelong Learning

Janice Withnall and Rebecca Harris*

This paper presents a number of findings which have arisen from a two year research project into the postgraduate study needs of journalists and public relation practitioners in Sydney. We believe these findings shed some light on lifelong learning or continuing education for journalists and the occupation of journalism.

To set the scene, I’ll begin by listing and defining, using the Macquarie Dictionary, the common terms which abound in the adult learning and education field and comment on the confusion which surrounds their meaning.

As a journalism educator I have experienced first hand the confusion that surrounds these terms. I believe the confusion is the result of people wanting changes, acting on their wants and so blurring the original meaning. Duke (1997) believes we are experiencing the disappearance of the dichotomy between education and training “Head and hand, liberal and vocational, knowledge and skills”. I expect these changes will result in new ideas, words and things.

- Learn, to acquire knowledge of or skill in by study, instruction, or experience
- Educate, to develop the faculties and powers of by teaching, instruction or schooling
- Teach, to impart knowledge of or skill in, give instruction in
- Train, to subject to discipline and instruction, educate, drill
- Knowledge, acquaintance with facts, truths or principles as from study or investigation
- Information, knowledge communicated or received concerning some fact or circumstance, news
- Skill, the ability that comes from knowledge, practice, aptitude

Research Project

The project was funded by the Initiatives in Teaching and Learning Grant program of the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. Its purpose was to explore what journalists and public relations practitioners were looking for when pursuing a higher degree. We focused on their preferred mode of offer, mode of delivery, content and assessment approaches. The expected outcome was a learner-centred curriculum.

It was not expected that the project would illuminate four matters; The push for flexible delivery (read technology); the changing nature of Australia’s higher education sector; people’s changing expectations of higher education, and the professionalisation of journalism and public relations. We have discussed these four matters in forthcoming articles.

Our approach to the project was to involve working journalists and public relations practitioners in a six stage research plan. We consciously took an atheoretical stance and were guided by the practice of the practitioners. The plan therefore developed in an iterative manner as we learned from each previous stage.

The six stages occurred between June 1995 and December 1997 and involved -

1. Finding out what journalists, public relations practitioners and professional writers wanted, expected, needed, and desired from a postgraduate program.
2. Developing a test course and proposed program based on these findings.
3. Running the test course with a small number of journalists and public relations practitioners.
4. Running an existing postgraduate course using these findings.
5. Finding out from managers responsible for authorising or providing public relations and journalism training, what was provided, needed and wanted.
6. Developing a tertiary program of learning for professional communicators, particularly journalists and public relations practitioners.

As we have limited time, I will mention how we went about those six stages and their highlights. We look forward to publishing a complete account of the study.

Stage 1 - Wants, Expectations, Needs, Desires

Participants were working journalists, public relations practitioners and professional/technical writers nominated by the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (NSW), the Public Relations Institute of Australia (NSW) and the Australian Society of Technical Communicators (NSW). Participants completed a questionnaire seeking demographic information prior to their focus group session. We ran four focus groups, one for each group and a mixed group where journalists, public relations practitioners and professional writers were present. Mode of offer, mode of delivery, content and assessment approaches were explored as was people’s desire to pursue a higher degree and why they would consider doing so.

Stage 2 - Test Course and Proposed Program

The questionnaire data was compiled, analysed and summarised and the focus group transcripts were coded, entered into a database and analysed. The results were extensive in amount and breadth. The results were synthesised to guide the course development and construct a picture of a possible postgraduate program structure, including teaching methods and content. The course was approved to proceed and the program was discussed extensively by
members of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science during 1996 and 1997.

During this stage we also embarked on an extensive literature review on media for flexible delivery and participatory and iterative methodologies.

**Stage 3**

A total of 9 journalists and public relations practitioners embarked on a 10 week course of study titled *Current Trends and Future Possibilities Impacting on Professional Communication*. Participants responded to publicity on the study and the call for volunteers to embark on the course.

The philosophy underlying the course was to give theoretical guidance and support while encouraging work based projects. The mode of offer was a 10 week module with delivery occurring through a reading package tailored to meet either the journalism or public relations group; optional workshops/activity days; small group meetings at a city venue when required; individual or group contact via telephone, email and fax; invitations to visiting scholar presentations; and national and international videoconference sessions with industry speakers. Participants were encouraged to develop an individual learning contract suitable to their aspirations. The nature of feedback, evaluation and assessment were negotiable.

We observed and recorded participants' comments and actions throughout the 10 weeks of the module. From this experimental learning situation we felt that four issues became apparent -

- Participants expected the content and assessment tasks to be immediately applicable to a current problem or workplace situation. This created tension between what was wanted and what was sound from an educational perspective.
- Participants required 'people that knew' to facilitate their learning. Although the focus group data indicated preference for self directed, autonomous adult learning, this was not apparent in the experimental learning situation.
- Participants engaged in the course to acquire information for purposes other than academic qualifications and individual learning.
- The course required extensive administrative and technical staff support.

**Stage 4 - Applying Findings to an Existing Course**

We reviewed Stage 3 in order to refine mode of offer, mode of delivery and assessment approaches in an existing course titled Communication Management, a 13 week course in the MA Communication and Cultural Studies degree. The changes we made included -

- Simplified reading package supplemented with three Study Guides.
- More structured face to face contact through three one day ‘intensives’ run on non-consecutive Saturdays.
- Supplementary materials and references placed on a password protected WWW site.
- Training in accessing and using the Internet.
- The learning contract was supplemented with the option to follow a more defined assessment path with project topics, deadlines and weighting suggested.

There were 41 participants. All enrolled in response to publicity on the course which clearly outlined content mode of delivery and assessment methods.

Using a questionnaire we gathered information on who was to take the course, their background and their expectations. We were aware that journalists and public relations practitioners were present in this group. We were also aware that other students looking at career change were present. We introduced written evaluation at three stages during the course as well as an observation/discussion process between the two researchers. From this experimental learning situation we found -

- There were a small number of autonomous learners in the group.
- Consultation with participants through meetings, telephone, email and fax, outside the intensives, was double the time allocated. A large number of students were unfamiliar with non traditional delivery methods. We believe their anxiety about the approach was reflected in extended consultation time.
- The majority of students did not refer to or use the Study Guides.
- Group discussion sessions during the intensives were replaced by structured ‘games’ to extend and involve students in what was being presented.
- Print resources were favoured above electronic resources by the majority of students. The cost of print resources for this course was substantially higher than other courses offered in the same degree program.
- Almost 50% of students opted for the defined assessment path. Work place based projects submitted were, in the main, of a high quality.
- Administrative and technical support required was significantly higher than for lecture/seminar/workshop delivery formats.
Stage 5 - Management Response to Training

In response to our reviewing the original focus group data, the findings of the two experimental learning situations and considering the changes occurring in the higher education sector in Australia during 1997 we decided to extend our research project to include those managers who provided or authorised training for journalists and public relations practitioners. We felt that their input would form the third element to curriculum development - industry advice.

The aim of this stage of the project was to explore the preferred structure and content of education and training in the two fields and the perceived purpose of education and training in the two fields. Participants were chosen at random. Public relations or corporate affairs people were selected from the Business Review Weekly top 100 companies list and the Yellow Pages listing of public relations consultancies. Editors, editorial trainers or managers responsible for training were selected using the Media Guide for media outlets in Sydney. Of the 57 people contacted, 36 participants completed a telephone questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 21 questions, 13 closed and eight open questions.

The responses to the closed questions were tabulated and the responses to the open questions coded and placed in a database. Analysis of the responses raised a number of questions which leads back to the opening of this paper and the different meanings given to terms involved with continuing education.

Stage 6 - Developing a Tertiary Program

Our tertiary program was guided by the information we gathered from learners, industry and educators involved in the project. Feedback from staff at UWS Nepean and other journalism and public relation educators has also been incorporated. The program meets the needs of those who collaborated and results in sound choices for those who wish to gain qualifications from certificates to professional doctorates, meet accreditation requirements or pursue information or a learning experience in its own right.

Specific courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level at UWS Nepean have benefited from the findings of this project, four new undergraduate degrees and one new specialisation in an existing undergraduate program have been launched, while four new postgraduate pathways are in preparation.

Next Stage

The research project has encouraged us to pursue questions surrounding -

- the concept of continuing professional development.
- the desire for information and skills versus the need for a learning experience.
- the low preference for the postgraduate degree by journalists and public relation practitioners.
- the affect such trends may have on the future of these occupations.

We look forward to exploring these questions and continuing our efforts to improve journalism and public relations education.

*Part of this research was made possible through collaboration with Deborah Balzhiser-Morton from the Department of Rhetoric at the University of Minnesota. Her involvement in Stage 1 and Stage 2 has informed much of the approach taken by the authors. Her work and contribution are acknowledged.

References


Janice Withnall is Journalism Coordinator and member of the Professional Communication Research Group at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. She lectures in the undergraduate and postgraduate journalism and communication specialisations. Her journalism research spans environment reporting, news team management, online journalism and continuing professional development for journalists and media workers. Rebecca Harris is a lecturer in public relations and organisational communication and member of the Professional Communication Research Group at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean.
A Hack’s Origins: The aspirations, assumptions and expectations of would-be journalists

Barbara Aysen and Katrina Mandy Oakham

Mike Richards writing in *The Australian* called for a national graduate school of journalism. He described the ideal graduates of this ideal school as being “familiar with their culture, its institutions and history, conscious of the values of Australia and of the Asia Pacific, intellectually disciplined as well as imaginative, committed to the highest professional and ethical standards, and accepting an obligation to uphold the values of openness, fairness and balance and democratic principle” (1996:16).

Deakin University has one of the largest outputs of journalism graduates of any Australian tertiary institutions. We are however constantly concerned by the quality of that output and having read the profile of Richards’ ideal journalism graduate we were curious as to how our graduates of 1997 would compare.

In mid 1995 we surveyed our first year on campus cohort. A five-page survey was distributed in class. Of the total cohort of 216, 189 received a questionnaire. Of those, 130 returned a completed form, a response rate of 69 per cent.

The questionnaire comprised 41 questions most of which were open-ended and designed to elicit students’ attitudes to the profession and its practitioners, their views on their chances of entering the profession and their own patterns of media consumption.

First Year Snapshot

A typical student profile, which emerged from this survey, was that our average journalism student was a 19-year-old female who wanted to work in magazines or on a feature section of a newspaper. This student based her own media consumption around the key consideration of ease of consumption. She was most likely to read a tabloid paper and watch commercial news. She listened to Triple J and admired Jana Wendt and Ray Martin. Despite seeing journalism as having low status with only “average” financial rewards this student was “optimistic” regarding their own career chances. (For further details of these findings see Aysen and Oakham 1996)

Clearly this “typical” student was not fulfilling the requirements of journalistic excellence as outlined by Richards.

Two years on however what changes if any had occurred with our first year students and were we getting any closer to the Richards’ ideal graduate?

We surveyed our third year cohort in April, 1997 using an eight page anonymous questionnaire. Of the 86 forms distributed, 40 were returned. Of the 40 respondents, all but one were majoring. The survey consisted of an eight page questionnaire aimed at soliciting students’ motivation for studying journalism, whether they intended to seek a career in the media, their perceptions of journalism as a career, their media usage, their definition of news and whether they had any role models in journalism.

Third Year Snapshot

The typical third year student who emerged from our follow-up survey was a 21-year-old female studying journalism for strictly vocational reasons. Her three years of study have left her more “hardbitten” and more aware of the complications surrounding journalism. Generally this student is optimistic about getting into the profession and is probably doing something to increase her chances, that is, either through work experience or freelance work. Her major news source is probably still a commercial service, most probably Channel 10. She still listens to Triple J and when it comes to role models it is most likely that she does not have one!

Summary of Major Findings

- Majority studying for vocational reasons and definitely planning a career in journalism
- Majority said they were now “more aware” of what was involved in journalism
- 17 said they were “more positive about getting a job in journalism. The reasons for this optimism included having published work or work experience, good marks in their course and personality traits such as being “competitive” or “determined”. One shrinking violet said he was sure to get into the profession because he could “write well, am well informed and modest.” Interestingly those who were not optimistic described themselves as “lazy” or “haven’t the enthusiasm to suck up.”
- Majority of “definites” said they were doing something to improve their chances of getting into journalism. Doing something ranged from “brushing up their German” to “getting chummy” with journalists.
- Ten out of 17 “definites” were doing something such as writing for papers and many were submitting regular contributions to local or specialist publications. A few cited their tertiary studies as their major initiative towards finding a position.
Majority said “love of writing” was their main reason for wanting to be journalists. Other frequently-cited reasons included that journalism would be “interesting” or that they enjoyed meeting people or the “variety” of work. Seven out of the 27 who “definitely” or “probably” intended pursuing a journalistic career indicated that their interest in journalism was at least in part due to the supposed power of the media and those who work in it.

First choice of news sources for the majority was commercial television news, most likely Channel 10. Only 8 students rated the “serious” news and current affairs programs, ABC and SBS news, the 7.30 Report, Foreign Correspondent and Sunday as first choice. Several students cited Frontline and even the ABC’s panel show Good News Week as among their favourite news/current affairs programs.

For role models top votes went to Stuart Littlemore and Eddie McGuire.

Littlemore was described by one of the more language-proficient of the cohort as “balls of steel and has the canes out”. Littlemore’s popularity might be put down to the fact that students are encouraged to watch his program and excerpts are used regularly in tutorials. Kerry O’Brien, Jana Wendt and Ray Martin (described as a “good interviewer”) were each nominated by three students.

News values - only one third of the group could nominate a major international news story

Majority nominated Port Arthur as the top national story for 1997. This choice may have been influenced by the fact that the questionnaires were distributed at the time of the first anniversary of the tragedy. Pauline Hanson and Mal Colston (in that order) were cited as the other most significant news items. Few students named more than two news items.

Majority could not nominate one news issue, which in their opinion required more coverage. Issues nominated ranged from the “rise of neo-conservatism” to “fashion.” Significantly only two students cited issues which might be seen to be of specific concern to youth, one suggesting unemployment should rate more coverage while another wanted to see more on “the age of government” and on education issues.

Virtual students? - Only two students said that they used the Net every day and 10 said they had never used the Net

Nearly half the cohort rarely or never used the Net. This response is particular surprising as Deakin University offers students free access to the Net through university computer labs and won the University of the Year in 1995 (when most of these students were in their first year) for its use of technology in teaching.

One third of the group nominated Triple J as their first choice of radio channel

Majority of students believed the profession of journalism to have low social status and no student thought journalism was well paid. There were some thoughtful responses as to the reasons for the low status of journalism. A selection included “misconceptions about their roles”, “public scrutiny”, “undefined privacy laws”, “use real life incidents for professional gain”.

Is that The Age in your pocket? - Of the 32 students at least considering journalism as a career, all but 6 professed to read a paper either every day or several days a week. The most popular choice among papers was The Age followed by the Herald Sun.

Conclusions

Survival of the Fittest

What our two surveys revealed is the confirmation of a self-selection process, which has implications for the arguments which are often mounted about over-enrolment in journalism courses (See Patching 1996). If from an original cohort of 225 students we are left with a potential pool of only 86 possibles joining the workforce then maybe there is less cause for concern. What may be of more concern is that we are seeing traces of the attitudes that these students will take to their own future professionalisation. If these students are taking a purely instrumentalist approach, a purely pragmatic approach then the obvious conclusion is that they will be too narrow-minded in their approach to professional practice.

News Values

Our survey would indicate that development of news sense is real deficiency and could therefore point to a weakness in the nature of the curriculum being offered.

More broadly these results may point to the educational context being non-conducive to the development of a news sense, or indeed that it may work actively against such a development, as indicated by Hemmingham’s 1989 survey which concluded that editors say non-graduates develop better news sense. The results of the survey are also interesting in that so very few of the students nominated youth as an issue requiring more coverage by the mainstream media which questions the notion that there is some alternative youth agenda when it comes to news definitions and criteria.

Cynical Hacks

They certainly do not appear to be suffering from any false illusions about the nature of their profession - the only delusion remaining appears to be their optimism about their own personal chances of breaking into the profession.

Critical Thinkers

One conclusion that could be of concern to us as educators is their accepting as opposed to critical attitudes. It must be of concern that the majority of the attitudes expressed by these students have changed little, or not at all, over the three years of study of the profession and its practices.

At the end of our first year survey we questioned the “valued added” factor of our input into our students and questioned what we could do with students “awash in a sea of stereotypes and superficial understandings of the profession they are allegedly want to enter” (Alysen and Oakham 1996:50). It seems that our current curriculum and pedagogical approach did not have a huge impact on those superficial understandings.

Finally let us return to that ideal graduate described by Richards and compare our third year students.

The Ideal: “familiar with their culture, its institutions and history”
The Real: very familiar with all aspects of popular culture
The Ideal: “conscious of the values of Australia and of the Asia-Pacific”
The real: ethnocentric
The Ideal: “intellectually disciplined as well as imaginative”
The Real: pragmatic practitioners
The Ideal: “committed to the highest professional and ethical standards”
The Real: craftspeople with a relativist approach to ethics and principles

So having reached these rather depressing conclusions where to from here? It is not all gloom and doom obviously some messages are getting through, for example, the need to be proactive in their employment bid.

But ultimately we have to accept that our interventions as “primary refiners” (Oakham 1996) is limited. What we may have to accept is that we are working with a curriculum of reinforcement which is ultimately a static curriculum which is not sufficient to intervene in a discourse of popular culture and popular misconceptions which pervade the students’ responses.

At Deakin we believe the answer lies in a dissection of our pedagogical models and a complete overhaul of our curriculum which we will be undertaking in the next two to three years. The “true” journalists may emerge from the present system through a process of natural self-selection but we do not believe that the truly radical or critical journalists will naturally emerge and that the onus is firmly back on us as journalism educators to “make it so”.

References:

Barbara Alysen lectures in broadcast journalism at Deakin University. She was previously chief producer of World News at SBS TV and prior to that a reporter for Channel 7 in Sydney, and a Canberra parliamentary reporter for Macquarie National News. Mandy Oakham is the Area Coordinator of Journalism at Deakin University. Prior to her arrival at Deakin in 1995, Mandy was the head of journalism at East Surrey College in England. As well as completing her Masters degree at London University, Mandy also acted as consultant to the Argus Newspaper group while in England and was an examiner for the National Council for the Training of Journalists.
Bringing in the 'Real World'—Virtually: Electronic situated learning in professional communication subjects

Dr Marsha Durham, Mr Russ Pennell, Mr Conrad Ozóg

Including real-world experiences in professional communication subjects can help students move away from the idea of universal prescriptions and instead focus on the influence of context on communication choice. Educators may find it difficult to incorporate authentic experience. The traditional ways of doing so—case studies, work experience and educators relaying their own experiences—are not without problems. Another possibility is available via technology. The Web can be used to create an example of situated learning by providing a simulated environment that students both participate in and analyse. The specified situation provides a framework for students to practise and assess communication choices in context. In UWS Nepean’s Communication program a Web-based writing subject has proved popular and effective in helping students appreciate how real-life situations affect what, how and why we communicate.

Introduction

Applied or professional education has been increasingly concerned with context as a foundation for teaching. In our teaching field, professional writing, the more prescriptive universal approaches (for example, ‘how to write a business letter’) have increasingly given way to a focusing on contexts for communication, especially those created by an organisation’s cultures and the discourse community that shapes how and what a professional practitioner communicates. In the classroom this contextual approach means teasing out the local elements and less overt issues that affect communication.

Educators in professional communication areas may find that without critical industry experience students neither understand nor appreciate the importance of context in shaping our communication choices. A major task is to incorporate this experience effectively into students’ education. In tertiary communication courses there are three common ways of linking with the workplace to provide students with this understanding: industry experience, case studies, and expert experience. All three can have drawbacks.

Industry placements provide authentic work-based experience. Ideally, placement supervisors regularly observe students in the workplace and develop structured methods of helping students assess their experiences. The cost of monitoring placements, however, means that they may be available to a restricted number of students. Other students may not be able to participate because their other commitments make it impossible to be involved in off-campus activities such as industry placements.

Authentic experience for students is often replaced in the classroom by the use of case studies, guest lecturers and lecturers’ personal experience. Case studies immerse students in a simulated business context. Two significant problems are associated with case studies, however: over-simplifying the problem to highlight a particular view or answer, and giving students unrealistic roles, such as being powerful manager instead of an entry-level employee, where communication choices are more limited. As a result, students, although perhaps enjoying a case study, may still not understand or appreciate the link between context and communication choice. Expert narrated experience is available through guest speakers from industry and academics who have been or are practising professional communicators. Their personal stories can help novices understand what it’s like ‘out there’. However, this method is not particularly student-centred, that is, students undertake the more passive activity of listening rather than personally experiencing communication as it exists in the workplace.

Simulated workplaces

Another possible way of linking with the workplace for educational reasons is to provide a virtual workplace via the Web. A growing number of Web-based programs centre around a virtual situation that students are asked to engage with as participants or players. Admittedly some of the programs replicate the problems described above. The better ones, however, support choice and autonomy through an open-ended structure and diversity, i.e. the amount and kinds of information provided. At their best Web-based simulations enable students to practice being effective communicators by providing realistic (‘messy’) problems, supporting self-directed investigation, and helping them reflect on their processes for learning and making decisions.

As writing educators we decided to experiment with Web-based material to overcome the problem of students not being able to ‘read’ an organisational culture and from that make appropriate vocabulary, structural and stylistic choices, nuanced to their cultural reading.

Using Commonwealth funds we developed a Web-based simulated organisation for an undergraduate Communication subject called Writing in Organisations (WIO). It is based on the concept of situated learning. The term ‘situated learning’ has many descriptions, but a simple explanation is given below:

“Learners become involved in a ‘community of practice’ which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. As the beginner or newcomer moves from the periphery of this community to its center, they become
more active and engaged within the culture and hence assume the role of expert or oldtimer.” (Open Learning Technology, 1996).

The learning experience for the WIO subject is based on a computer simulation rather than something that students experience in real life. It provides a community of practice by asking students to pretend that they are new employees undertaking initial communication tasks for their immediate supervisor. As they seek and gain information students are expected not only to complete tasks but share their perceptions with others as the basis for class discussion.

Because students have realistic and open-ended tasks some educators could argue that the Web program falls into the realm of problem-based learning (PBL was reviewed in detail by Lynette Sheridan Burns in AJR, 19.2). Although PBL often focuses on an ill-defined problem students are then progressively provided with more ‘clues’ to explore possible solutions. The process works well in areas where information can be separated according to the level of detail, for example with medical students asked to diagnose according to symptoms provided. In contrast the emphasis in situated learning is the learning context itself, primarily because “a large part of learning can be shown to be dependent upon tacit knowledge and its cultural context” (Wolfson and Willinsky 1997). The intent of WIO is not to solve a particular problem but to immerse students in a shared context that allows them to consider, debate and choose amongst communication possibilities.

In using a computer simulation for situated learning a potential problem is “whether, or how usefully, computer-based environments can represent a culture and enable authentic activity” (Pennell, Durham, Ozog and Spark 1997). How does the WIO program attempt a realistic situation? It provides a simulated organisation that has employees, who exist in a hierarchy and have different formal positions and cultural roles. Each student, as a new graduate employee, works from an on-screen office, with an on-screen phone and a company phonebook. An example of an initial task is telephoning people in the organisation to set up interview times. Some people aren’t at their phone or don’t return the student’s call, frustrating experiences that help students begin to understand that information gathering in an organisation is not always easy. Students interview employees by choosing from an on-screen list of possible questions. The interviewees are depicted by on-screen drawings. Their responses are in two modes: oral (recorded voices played via the computer) and written (on-screen transcript). The company’s virtual library provides additional information, and the student’s virtual supervisor is contactable via e-mail.

Results of a pilot study

The WIO subject was piloted with six undergraduate Communication students in the second semester of 1997. The unexpected bonus of having a small class size also helped to create a learning environment that was more supportive and collaborative than usual. The students took the open nature of the program in stride, working well both independently and in collaboration. Their evaluation of the subject was quite positive, as shown by the comments below. They enjoyed open-ended learning and having more independence and control over the learning experience. This enthusiasm led to more involved discussions and their collaboratively using shared experience to tease out aspects of successful writing for this particular situation.

- “Since [the mode] was different, it made the learning exciting.”
- It has expanded upon the ‘reader based’ concept and takes so much more than readability into account when writing within an organisation.”
- Everyone in the group had something positive to contribute whether it be computer advice or past experiences relevant to the course. You felt comfortable broaching your ideas as you knew that you would be listened to and taken seriously.”
- “Compared to other classes, this one was better because it was two way communication. In the sense that we were able to give our opinions and get them discussed and also we got feedback from the instructor. We received detailed feedback that we would be able to utilise.
- “We were able to develop good relationships with other students as we were faced with the same problems; this to me was quite motivating.”
- “Being able to decide what we feel is important to talk about, consulting in the decisions on assignment deadlines and passing on knowledge to each other made the workshop environment very comfortable.”
- Through high school and university, I have always been given a specific topic …to research and have not had to develop my own. Perhaps more of this type of research report could be given to students throughout their degree!!”
- “…communicating in a business setting is harder than you expect. Not only do you have to take into consideration who the report is being written for you must also be aware of who could potentially read it without your knowledge. You must also determine what information is important and relevant and what information could offend and embarrass other members of Virtual Records…In my other university assignments I have never really thought about how much of what we write is a balancing act with many different forces pulling it each way.”
Conclusion

The Writing in Organisations subject uses a Web-based simulation to sensitise students about the contextual nature of professional communication. Students' response to working as professional communicators in the virtual organisation has been overwhelmingly positive. This example suggests the benefit of Web-based situated learning as an addition or alternative to industry placements, case studies, guest speakers and the lecturers' personal stories. As funding in higher education is reduced at the same time that industry increasingly demands graduates who are effective communicators Web-based situations may become the best way to help students explore and understand the intricacies of communication in the workplace.


Dr Marsha Durham is a senior academic who teaches Professional Writing subjects and Organisational Communication in the School of Communication and Media, UWS Nepean. She is interested in flexible modes of delivery, text analysis, technical communication in Australia, and university management. As a recipient of a CUTSD grant Marsha developed a web-based subject, Writing in Organisations.

Conrad Ozog is Chair of the School of Communication and Media in UWS, Nepean. His interests include cross-cultural communication, trans-national professional communication and bilingualism. He has published widely, his latest book being concerned with bilingualism and language planning in Brunei.

Russ Pennell has been writing educational software since 1984. He is currently the Educational Technology Coordinator within UWS Nepean's Academic Development Unit. Russ created the Virtual Records Website.
TTFN, Charles

A celebration of the life of

Charles James Bishop Grayburn Stuart, Ph.D

6th January 1939 - 29th January 1998

This edition of JEA Conference proceedings (1997) is dedicated to the memory of our colleague and friend, Dr Charles Stuart who died suddenly at his home in Toowoomba on Thursday the 29th of January 1998.

Charles Stuart will be remembered as an out-going and outspoken journalist, editor and journalism educator.

Charles chaired several sessions at the 1997 Journalism Education Association annual conference. He was renowned for timely, pertinent and entertaining contributions in the sessions he attended. As always Charles worked tirelessly behind the scenes, not only editing AJR 19(2), but also preparing the way for the incorporation of our association.

Charles was about to embark on what we all felt would be a distinguished term as editor of AJR in its 21st year of publication. The untimely and unfair dismissal of Charles Stuart saddens all of us who remain to continue the work he shared in for more than 20 years.

Our sympathy to Monica Stuart and Charles' family.

'They will indeed be big red braces to fill.'

How his JEA colleagues farewelled Charles on the Internet

Our thanks to Rod Kirkpatrick for compiling this list on behalf of JEA members and friends of Charles Stuart.

CLEM LLOYD BREAKS THE NEWS

I have just learned the sad news that our valued friend and colleague, Dr Charles Stuart, head for many years of the Journalism school at USQ, died this morning after a massive heart-attack. Characteristically, Charles was working at home on his computer. I am sure we will all miss Charles and the quirkish, idiosyncratic touches he brought to the debate on journalism education. He was, of course, a distinguished practitioner with a formidable record extending over several institutions and many years.

As Charles's Ph.D. supervisor over seven years, I will particularly miss him. Only yesterday, I received a picture from him of his graduation at this university last October. He took immense pride in his degree which was based on an awesome volume of research and occupied him for many years.

Apart from many other signal distinctions, Charles will be remembered for writing a 120,000 word thesis wholly in the present tense, a feat which I imagine will never be eclipsed. I am sure we all join in lamenting Charles's passing and in our expression of sympathy to his wife, Monica. Yours in sadness

Professor Clem Lloyd
Graduate School of Journalism
University of Wollongong
29/1/98, 5.10 pm.
SHELTON GUNARATNE
I am shocked and saddened by Charles' untimely death.
Professor Shelton Gunaratne
Mass Communications Department, Moorhead State University, MN, 56563, USA

MICHAEL MEADOWS et al
It is with deepest regret that we acknowledge the death of Charles Stuart surely one of the
great characters of the Australian Journalism Education scene. The title 'character' in no way
detracts from the enormous contribution Charles has made to advancing Journalism education
scholarship in Australia.
Charles's ceaseless JEANET stream of up to date web sites and information which related to
ways in which we might all do our jobs a little better will be sadly missed. His enigmatic, jovial
approach to teaching and research mirrored his attitude to life.
While the old bugger drove many of us around the bend at times with his often interesting and
unusual perspectives on J-ED, he was honest and always willing to share the knowledge he
had gained. We'll miss the cheery, foghorn voice drifting through the Toowoomba fog.
We'll miss his often confronting net talk, guaranteed to spark a response from the most
overworked of J-educators. Perhaps most of all, we'll miss the enormous optimism which was
with him until he died.
TTFN Charles.
Michael Meadows, Susan Forde & Suzanna Layton
Griffith University
30/1/98

LEN GRANATO
I learned of Charles' death late Sunday night upon stepping off a plane from Vanuatu. Like
Clem, the day before Barbara and I left for Vila I received a graduation pic. I was an examiner.
And I can attest to the thoroughness of his research. And his use of present tense, which drove
me to distraction but did not impede his getting the degree.
Like you, I am devastated by his untimely departure. We'll miss him as a colleague and journalism
will miss him as a champion. Goddammit, I was looking forward to spending a year working for
him. It's just not fair.
Len
Len Granato
Writer, Editor, Reporter, Educator
Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
2/2/98

LYNETTE SHERIDAN BURNS
Those of us in the Department of Communication & Media Arts who knew Charles Stuart share
the deep regret expressed by our colleagues in journalism education on his death. None who
met Chuckles will ever forget him.
We will miss our annual jousts with him at the JEA Conference, his braces, his certainty and his
TTFN.
Things just aren't going to be same.
Lynette Sheridan Burns
Head, Department of Communication & Media Arts
University of Newcastle; Vice President, Journalism Education Association
2/2/98
WENDY BACON
Scrolling through the holiday email this morning, I read several messages from Charles Stuart and was then shocked by the very sad news of his death. I was one of those colleagues who benefited from his generosity in responding to my email requests. Like many other journalism educators, I valued his contributions to discussions and the information he so willingly shared. These will be missed by all of us.
Charles' commitment to linking a practical education in journalism with scholarship was obvious to all who met him. While I did not know him well, I do know how much he would have valued the recognition of his research in the comments of Clem, Roger and others.
On behalf of all of us at UTS, I would like to pass on our sadness at his death and our sympathy to his friends and family, especially Monica.
Wendy Bacon
UTS, Sydney
2/2/98

ERROL HODGE
On this, the day of his funeral, John Tebbutt and I, in far-flung Gippsland, want to add our message of shock and condolence at the untimely death of Charles Stuart. I, for one, think it most appropriate that the proceedings of the last JEA conference should be dedicated to this man who gave so much to journalism education, and, as far as I can remember, never missed a JEA conference.
The journalism education scene will be a lot less colourful without Charles's bright red braces and ebullient contributions.
Weihong, John and I are writing separately to Monica.
Errol Hodge
Monash University
2/2/98

GAIL SEDORKIN FOR CQU
At the risk of repeating everyone else — the JEA, the conference and Jeanet just won't be the same without Charles.
Everyone at CQU who knew Charles will miss him.
We send our sincerest condolences and wishes to Monica.
Gail Sedorkin
CQU, Rockhampton
2/2/98

MICHAEL PROVIS
It is with great sorrow that I received the news of Charles death. He was a true “character” but never let being a “character” get in the way of enthusiastic or strong debate.
It is a great memorial to Charles that we mourn his passing on the JEANET - the net will be the poorer without his contributions.
We all will miss him. I have passed the sad news on to John Hurst in Beijing.
Michael Provis
PO Box 3005, Burnley North 3121
2/2/98

IAN RICHARDS
I returned to work this morning from extended leave only to learn of Charles's untimely death. To say I'm shocked would be an understatement. Charles was one of the first JEA members to befriend me when I joined the association in the mid-1980s and from that time on he was
consistently warm, enthusiastic, and supportive - if somewhat idiosyncratic and cantankerous. I will miss him greatly and my thoughts are with Monica at this time. I strongly support the suggestion from Janice and Martin to dedicate the proceedings of JEA '97 to Charles - perhaps the next issue of AJR should be similarly dedicated.
Ian Richards
Senior Lecturer in Journalism, School of Communication and Information Studies
University of South Australia
St Bernards Rd, Magill, South Australia 5072
2/2/98

KATRINA MANDY OAKHAM
It was typical that during the Penrith conference I spent half my time when in Charles' company arguing with him "vigorously" and the other half laughing just as "vigorously" but that was Charles! I only wish I could be at his funeral to wear the leopard leggings of which he seemed so fond! All at Deakin will miss him greatly and we also support the suggested dedications to his memory.
Katrina Mandy Oakham
Area Co-ordinator, Journalism Studies
Faculty of Arts, Deakin University Vic 3217

DOUG WHITE & BEATE JOSEPHI
As were all JEA members, we too were shocked and saddened to learn of Charles' most untimely death. Charles was a truly entertaining and original person - we'll miss him greatly.
Doug White & Beate Josephi
Edith Cowan University Perth
2/2/98

ROD KIRKPATRICK
What a moving service it was at grand old St Luke's Anglican Church, Toowoomba, yesterday to give thanks for the life of Charles Stuart and farewell him. About 250 people jammed the church for the hour-long service during which four colleagues presented eulogies. Meanwhile, many JEAneters were paying tribute on the net, and I hope these will be collected and presented to Monica.
Let me say that back in the early eighties when I was co-ordinating the J course at the old DDIAE (now USQ) in Toowoomba, Charles was doing some journalism teaching at UQ and beavering away at various Masters qualifications. and undergrad subjects (he did not have an undergrad degree, but loads of practical experience). We used to swap ideas for assignments and handouts, and so his readiness to share goes back to the beginning of his J teaching career.
What an ebullient, energetic character he was! Only last year he was the sole respondent to my inquiries for back copies of Australian Journalism Review; I had some gaps he was able to fill, and he had some gaps I was able to fill.
At the service yesterday, we started by singing "Morning has broken" and that set the scene for a very positive celebration of his life (rather than mourning of his death) during which there were often gales of laughter from the gathering as wonderful anecdotes about Charles's exploits were recounted.
Vale Charles.
Rod Kirkpatrick
Senior Lecturer, Journalism Department
University of Queensland
CRATIS HIPPOCRATES
Charles's funeral was as idiosyncratic as he was. There was the Catholic priest giving the service in an Anglican church, at Charles's request of course. His graduation picture was on the cover of the hymn notes, with a cheeky smirk saying, "see, see, I finally got there". Present tense and all. The coffin was draped with his doctoral regalia, along with the Stuart tartan, the university choristers sang hymns and a lone piper played at the grave site. He had a poet, a philosopher and a social worker speak about him at the funeral in moving tributes about his enthusiasm, positive nature and lust for life. There were anecdotes celebrating his quirky sense of humour and his avant garde dress sense which included "a penchant for bright red braces", and out of date hair styles. The funeral was a celebration of his life, his achievements and his love for Monica. A few of us cried and then laughed.

Mostly Charles left me with a laugh.

Cratis Hippocrates
Head. School of Media & Journalism, QUT

JOHN HENNINGHAM
As Rod and Cratis have said, Charles' funeral yesterday was indeed a moving experience and a very fitting remembrance and celebration of Charles' life, and evidence of his and Monica's wide circle of friendship.

I was present at the "birthing" of Charles as a journalism educator, when he moved to UQ from the Sunday Sun in 1980 to take on a semester contract position teaching a print subbing course to our second-year students. He made an immediate impact, and was most appreciated by the students for the innovations in teaching methods and style he introduced. (Although he did peeve some of our then colleagues in the Government department by rearranging all the desks in their seminar room so that it took on the shape of a subs' table.) For those of us in the tiny journalism sub-department, Charles was a congenial colleague, who more than played his part in teaching and in contributing to administration and committee work.

The UQ powers-that-be (or powers-that-were) were displeased at Charles's lack of tertiary qualifications, and insisted upon his achieving "appropriate credentials" before continuing as a lecturer. But in this he was forced to run a cruel race: assurances that he could slip into a postgrad degree by achieving an MA(qual) were not honoured, and after completing his qual year (the equivalent of an honours course, including thesis!), he was set the task of completing the requirements for a BA before he could embark on his research degree. (Charles used to joke that he was going through a reverse career: editor - lecturer - postgrad student - undergrad student — and speculated as to whether he would end up having to enrol in kindergarten.)

To his credit, Charles took on the BA studies with great gusto, assembling, in Renaissance Man fashion, a dazzling range of subjects (Philosophy, Computer Science, Maths, Government, Anthropology & Sociology, History and Classics, as well as journalism), designed not just to meet degree requirements, but to give him the broad and diverse education he had craved. And he performed with distinction across the range of disciplines, despite taking on a full-time load while also working.

Charles was at last admitted to MA candidature, and began work on the important project — the study of the history of journalism education in Australia — which was to occupy him for the rest of his life. From the MA he transferred to Ph.D. candidature under Clem Lloyd's able supervision at Wollongong University, and I was very pleased to learn last year that his degree had been awarded.

Many tributes to Charles' quixotic sense of humour and unique qualities of being able to cause simultaneous exasperation and amusement were aired at the funeral and have been shared through the Virtual obituaries from JEA members. Charles would have greatly enjoyed these tributes.

I remember he was quite chuffed when Roger Patching contrived to have his university renamed (almost) after Charles. A dedicated issue of AJR and Conference Proceedings, as suggested
by Martin Hirst and Ian Richards, would be a worthy tribute. And I hope we can look forward to some posthumous publications drawing from Charles’ Ph.D. research and other current projects. Charles was rightly aggrieved at Australian ignorance of the proud history of the Stuart monarchs, particularly the Charles Stuarts and the Young Pretender, whose flair and daring he may have inherited. No doubt during loyal toasts he would be inclined to toast the king “over the water” — but I suspect he was a republican. Sad that he should be buried on the opening day of the Constitutional Convention.

RIP Charles.
John Henningham
Head, Department of Journalism
University of Queensland
4/2/98

ROGER PATCHING, JEA PRESIDENT
Home again after the very quick trip to Toowoomba to farewell our colleague Charles, and having had about 22 hours on the road in the last three days to think about our eccentric friend and his funeral service, I’d like to add a few thoughts to the touching pieces that have swamped his favourite medium of late.

Monica said that Charles had said he wanted Father Des Coates to take the service because 'he did a good funeral'. And that he did! Charles would have been chuffed. Everyone had their favourite story about Charles. For Cratis it was spending the best part of a day at Melbourne airport because he and Charles were so deep in conversation that they missed their plane! For one of those giving a tribute it was the honeymoon dinner at Sofala (near Bathurst) with dogs copulating on the roof. Each of the four people who paid public tribute to Charles — and the Catholic Priest who obviously knew our Charles well — captured part of his character. Father Des said he wouldn’t be surprised if the next journalism educator to reach the pearly gates was greeted by St Peter wearing ‘red braces’. And when he met ‘the late JC’ as he called him, he probably said, ‘there’s a few things I’d like to discuss with you’.

One of those giving tributes said Charles ‘raised bad taste almost to an art form’. Another mentioned how Charles had organised a marvellous 40th Birthday party for his beloved Monica at which most remarked she didn’t look anything like 40 — more like 35. She was, in fact, 47. And the idiosyncratic presents he gave her over the years — a wheelbarrow once and 100 bags of manure on another occasion. He was just the friend you needed, another said, when faced with a boring train ride. That was ‘our Charles’. He died as he lived, communicating. And he was buried on the day they started the Constitutional Convention - he would have liked that, with his love of the JEA constitution, and his delight in bringing it to our collective attention at various AGMs. He was larger than life, and we will all miss him.

Roger Patching, JEA President
Charles Stuart University, Bathurst
4/2/98

GAIL SEDORKIN
I would like to add my own personal message to the one sent from Central Queensland University. My fondest thoughts of Charles is the way he always made me feel so welcome at JEA conferences even when I was very new to academia. He attended my very first paper at Christchurch and was most supportive and encouraging. After the conference Charles, Graeme Griffin and myself all went touring around Christchurch. To say we had a good time is an understatement, and the memory that quickly comes to mind is Charles with his trousers rolled up and handkerchief on head paddling in the water at a seaside resort near Christchurch. The photos never fail to bring a smile to my face.

Yours most sincerely
Gail Sedorkin
4/2/98
MYLES BREEN
Rod Kirkpatrick's idea of giving Monica a collection of the JEA tributes to Charles pleased me very much and I would like to add my signature. The tributes on the net were very eloquent. Suffice it for me to say that when Roger Patching called me last Friday with the news I was very saddened. The news of the joyous nature of the celebration of his life at the church service was uplifting, as was, for many of us, the experience of knowing Charles in this life.
Professor Myles Breen
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst NSW 2795
4/2/98

NICOLE D'ENTREMONT
On behalf of everyone in the Department of Mass Communication at USQ, I would like to thank all of you for your touching tributes to Charles. I was in Singapore on staff exchange when Charles passed away suddenly. I received the news on the day of his funeral, and was terribly sad to learn of his passing. I returned to work today, only to find my inbox full of your praise for Charles as a journalism educator, colleague and friend. Indeed, we all had our moments with Charles. He once told me it takes a great deal of energy to work with him on a daily basis. He was right. At the same time, he had a jovial manner and sense of humour uniquely his own. He was generous with advice and always took the time to dig up materials that might be useful in my teaching and research. We all admired his drive and enthusiasm for teaching. He was extremely dedicated to his students. For that, he gained their admiration and respect. He was committed to giving students a strong practical background in journalism, along with a good grounding in ethics and law. I know the students will miss him terribly, as will his colleagues. His USQ colleagues will be celebrating his life in a way he would have appreciated — with a send-off party. We'll be meeting for drinks Friday at 4 pm at the USQ Club. Ponytails and red suspenders are optional.
Regards,
Nicole d'Entremont
Lecturer, Broadcast Journalism
University of Southern Queensland
5/2/98

MARTIN HIRST
I have just finished proofing these pages and find myself sitting at a computer with a hot tear in my eye, but you also made me laugh. After reading your comments I now know Charles more fully. Thankyou.
Martin Hirst
Lecturer in Journalism, 1997 JEA Conference co-convenor
School of Communication and Media, UWS Nepean
14/3/98
The Journalism Education Association

The Journalism Education Association has members at all the major Universities and Colleges that offer a curriculum in journalism and media studies in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. The JEA also has members involved in training at several newspapers and broadcasters and aims to foster links between educators and industry. Membership is open to anyone working in journalism and the media, or teaching in journalism and related fields anywhere in the world. The Journalism Education Association is eager to develop links with individuals and associations with similar interrests throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

Australian Journalism Review

The Association publishes a refereed journal, Australian Journalism Review (AJR). Subscriptions are available with JEA membership ($AUS100 per year), or separately to individuals and institutions.

Journalism Education Association Annual Conference

The JEA holds an annual conference in December each year. For information about the JEA 1998 Conference, please contact JEA Vice President (Conference), Ms Jacqui Ewart, Department of Communication and Media Studies, Central Queensland University, Rockhampton, Queensland, 4702, Australia.

Phone: (07) 4927 5975
Fax: (07) 4930 9501
Email: j.ewart@cqu.edu.au

The 1997 conference was held at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. For more information about the proceedings of the 1997 JEA Conference contact Janice Withnall (02 9678 7326) or Martin Hirst (02 9678 7363).

To join the Journalism Education Association

Contact the JEA Secretary
Ms Mandy Oakham
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Membership is $AUS100 per year, payable at each annual conference (December) for the following 12 months.

Journalism Education Association’s (JEA) Home Page

The Journalism Education Association (JEA) has its own Website at www.usq.edu.au/faculty/arts/journ/jeapage1/htm. Active pages cover:
  • a history of the Association
  • details about the next JEA Conference
  • rules and categories for the Ossie Awards
  • a contact list of all journalism courses in Australia and neighbouring countries
  • membership of the JEA Executive and points of contact
  • links to thousands of Websites that may be of interest to journalism educators, journalism students, and journalists
  • an index to the Australian Journalism Review and its predecessors since 1976.

The latter site includes access to most of the articles published over the last two years. Meanwhile, work is still being carried out on links to the JEA Newsletter, Constitution, and minutes of meetings.