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Book review

The 21st century media (R)evolution

Jim Macnamara

Published 2010, Peter Lang, New York, pp.410

Reviewer: Deirdre Quinn-Allan

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The 21st Century Media (R)evolution by Professor Jim Macnamara from the University of Technology, Sydney, should be received as a welcome addition to professional and scholarly discussion on emergent media and their impact on communication disciplines and practices. Taking an ‘analytical approach grounded in research’, Macnamara seeks to provide the reader with a theoretical framework for evaluating contemporary and future-focused communication issues mediated by an evolving media landscape. As the title of the book suggests, Macnamara believes that change will tend evolution rather than revolution.

The book is timely and fills a much needed gap in the literature. New and emergent digital media – from an application, technology and business-model perspective - are of great interest because of their impact on existing modes of practice and communication paradigms. As is often the case with new developments debate can be simplified to a binary of *for or against*. This has been true of practitioner and academic discourse surrounding the evolving media landscape but Macnamara navigates the reader through a middle ground as well as situating debate, where necessary, in an historical context so we don’t forget lessons from the past as we try to understand what lies ahead.

The first three chapters of the book set out to provide the reader with a context in which to consider change. And as an important first step Macnamara seeks to clarify definitions around commonly used words and concepts. The book does not resolve all issues to do with muddled usage but does challenge the reader to think about their own understanding and application of terms and demonstrates throughout why it is important that practitioners, academics and students seek clarity in expression.

As the titles of chapters 4-10 indicate, much of the book is oriented towards the future . These chapters situate emergent media within the fields of community and culture, politics, journalism, advertising and public relations. Chapter 8 is devoted to exploring media business models which is of particular relevance to journalists, advertisers and public relations practitioners who are, in a sense, variously content or message generators reliant on media to communicate

the same. Throughout these chapters Macnamara explores change from both practitioner and audience perspective.

Not unexpectedly, Macnamara uses the final chapter to draw conclusions for the reader and provides a summary of key trends and predictions. Although he acknowledges that his book is 'timebound', the research focus and his ability not to rely too heavily on predictions to frame discussion, means that this book will remain relevant far longer than many contemporary texts which adopt a 'how to' or 'technology' focus.

Avoiding the hype which surrounds emergent media *The 21st Century Media (R) evolution* is a well written, approachable book which doesn't fall into the trap of simplistic proselytizing about the benefits or dangers associated with media change. This book is highly recommended for anyone with a professional or scholarly interest in media and communication.