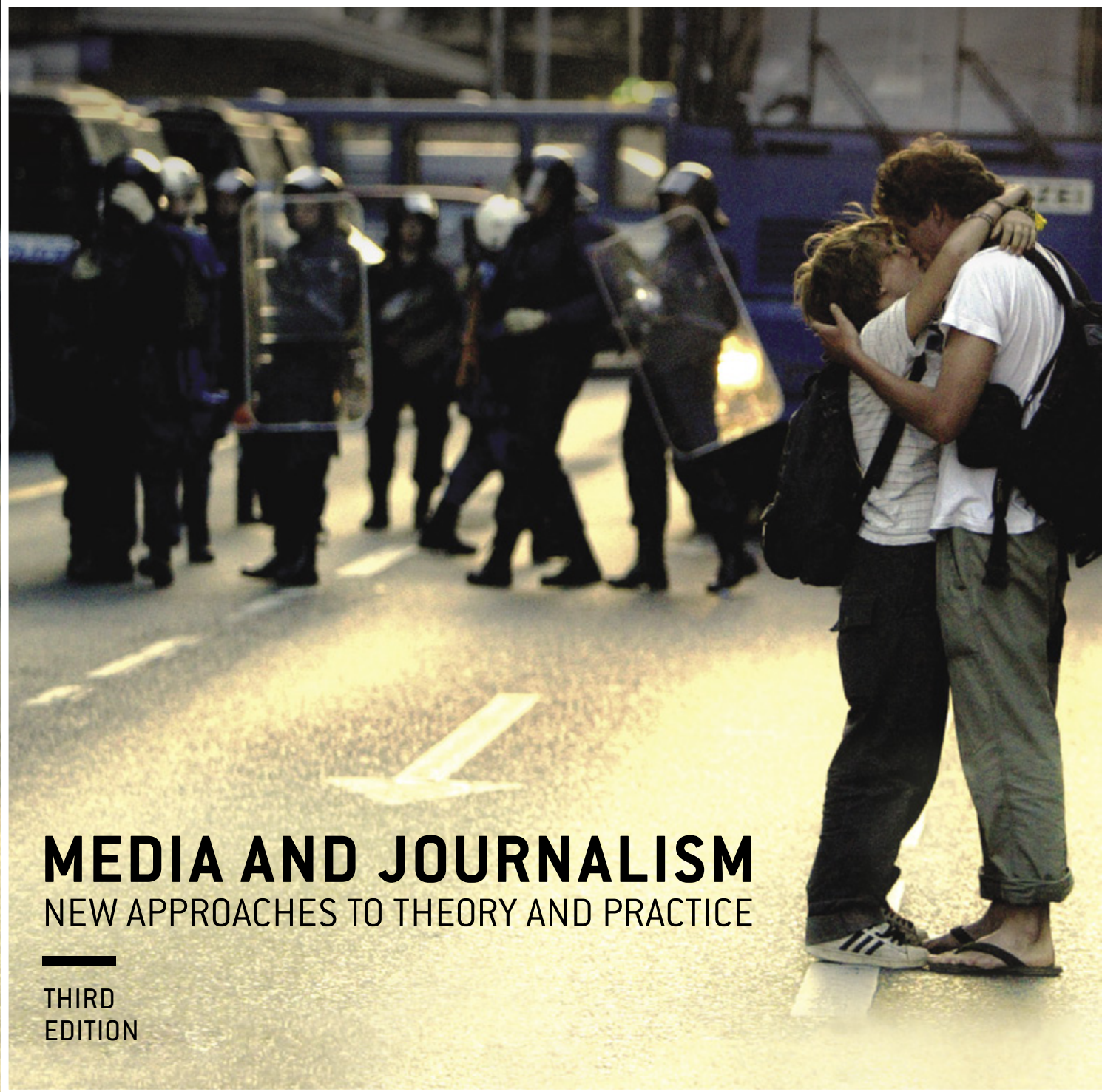


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#JASON BAINBRIDGE #NICOLA GOC #LIZ TYNAN



MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

NEW APPROACHES TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

THIRD
EDITION

MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

NEW APPROACHES TO THEORY AND PRACTICE



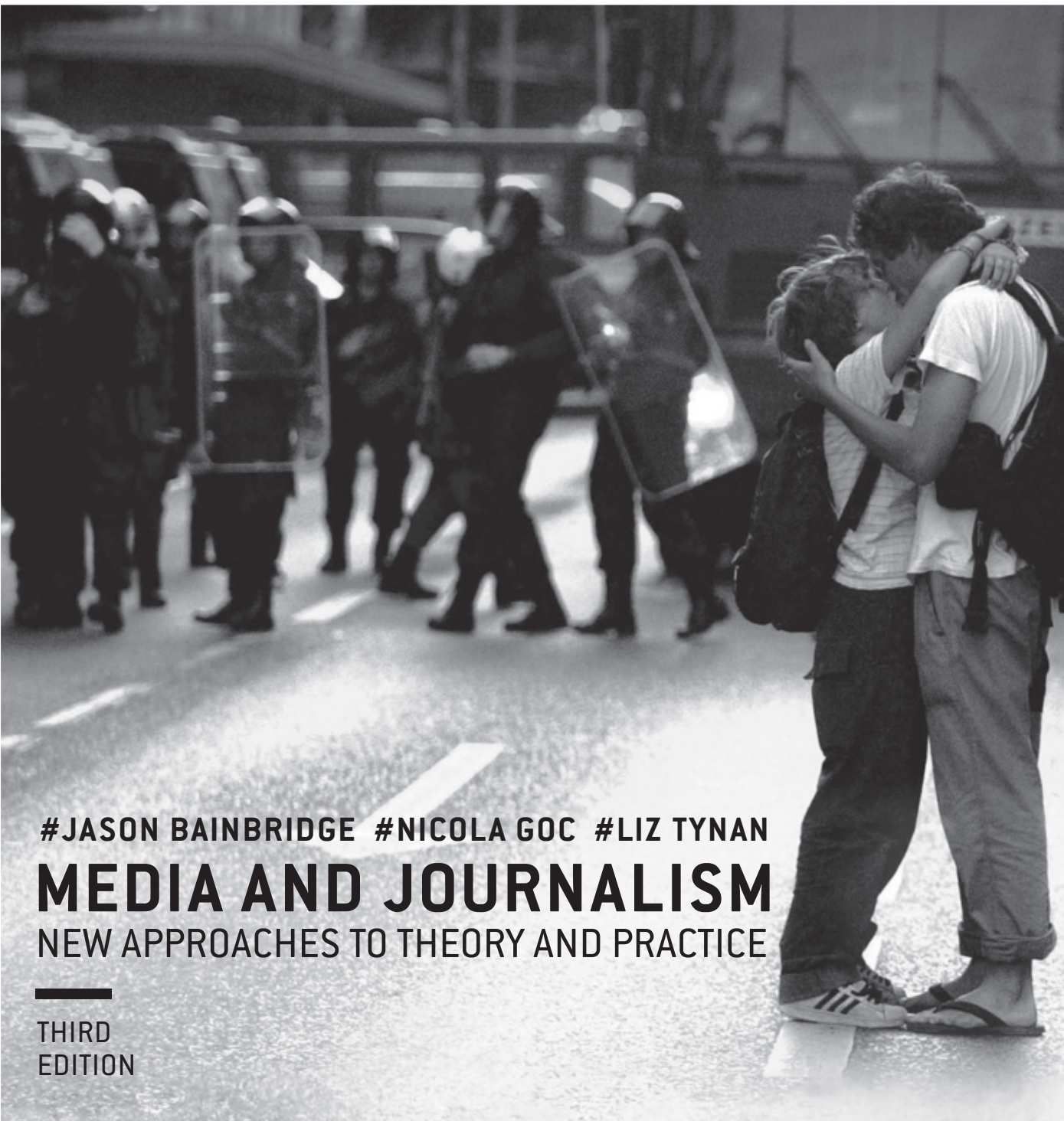
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Dedication

To the late Anne Dunn, broadcaster and academic, whose passion for inspiring young journalists and media workers lives on.

From Jason Bainbridge:

My father passed away during the first edition of this book and my mother passed away during this most recent one. This book is therefore dedicated to Graham and Pamela Bainbridge who first inspired a love of media in me and to all the many students, colleagues and friends who have contributed directly and indirectly to this book over the years since. I now know a great deal more about Alfred Hitchcock, action figures and *Angry Birds* than any one person possibly should—hence my urge to share it with all of you. So thanks for that.

From Nicola Goc:

To Sage Mila Goc: who knows what the media landscape will look like when you are a young woman embarking on a career in the 2030s? One thing is for certain: it will be built on the commitment and dedication of today's journalists and media workers, academics, and students of journalism and media who will continue the fight for a free and open media and the public's right to know.

From Liz Tynan:

To the many journalism students who have, over the years, made me think more clearly about my profession, made me value it more highly and inspired in me a conviction that all reports of the demise of a free media are premature. And to my little grand-nephew Alexander, born while this book was in production. May you grow up in world with a free and vibrant media.

FOREWORD

Journalism in Australia—and indeed, in most parts of the world—is considered to be in ‘crisis’. It’s a buzzword at the moment. National security is in crisis due to seemingly ever-present terrorism threats; global economies are in crisis; and our media is in crisis due to threats to its independence, ethics and quality from various quarters. Newspapers, which have provided journalistic leadership for as long as they have existed, face declining audiences and are challenged to prove their relevance. There are a significantly fewer journalists operating in an environment that requires even more content than ever before, faster than ever before, across a multitude of platforms. The bulk of this pressure stems from the proliferation of online news and the immediate nature of electronic communications—including social media—which now permeate our lives.

In this environment, journalism educators continue to try to inspire journalists of the future to hold tight to the ideals of crusading, probing, thorough, accurate, comprehensive journalism: journalism that can make a difference. To produce this type of journalism we must be transparent about what our industry does well, and what it does not do so well. The task of the journalism educator is not a simple one. We must be critical, but we must be practical. We must teach our students to aim high, but we must not be unrealistic about what can be achieved. We must instill hope that a future journalist can prompt a Royal Commission, expose corruption, or shine a spotlight on injustice, but temper that hope with the realisation that many of our graduates will earn their crust as public relations professionals rather than as journalists. This is the world in which we live.

The new edition of this important and lasting text from the team of Jason Bainbridge, Nicola Goc and Liz Tynan highlights these contrasts well. It facilitates university-trained journalists to learn ‘how to’ practise journalism while keeping a solid eye on the critiques of the profession. It encourages their self-reflective practice: Is this right? Is this good journalism? What has prompted this story? How can I cover it truthfully, accurately and fairly? New chapters and case studies on digital and social media, and on misogyny directed towards female journalists particularly through social media, ensure a necessary update on the changing environment in which journalists operate. The authors provide a way forward for the journalists of the future to coalesce their skills-based knowledge with their critical thought. In this new edition, these teachings are imparted with a full recognition of the contemporary media world in which our graduates will operate—a fast-paced, often under-resourced industry. It is an industry that combines the past requirements of what we now call ‘traditional’ journalism with the ever-present pressures of social media updates and ‘profiles’ that have become a standard part of the modern journalists’ tool kit. In all of this, journalism lives as a profession upon which society relies, and from which society expects a great deal.

Susan Forde
Associate Professor
Griffith University
2015

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

Shock! Horror! Universities are teaching courses in media studies! Students are wasting their time studying *Neighbours* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*! It's a regular story in the newspapers. But let's be honest, media studies academics are just as bad. Shock! Horror! Journalists are pandering to their audiences, telling them the stories they want to hear about celebrities rather than challenging the status quo and championing a left-wing revolution.

It's a war out there. But as someone with a foot in both camps, I think it's a shame, because it's clear that the two sides have a lot in common, and that each has a lot to learn from the other. As popular media writers, we could do with understanding the history of our professions, and thinking self-reflexively about our work so we can understand its purpose and how it could be done differently. And as media studies academics, we could do with learning the skills of basic factual research, and how to write clearly.

If only somebody would write a book that would show journalists and media studies academics what they have in common. A book that would give journalists an understanding of the context in which they work, and tell media studies academics how to write properly. Oh wait. They have. This is it. It's good. Jason, Nicola and Liz have produced an audacious book that ranges from the history of the media to the skills of interviewing, from theories of how the public sphere works to basic rules of clear writing, from Habermas to Lindsay Lohan. I haven't seen a book such as this before, and I'm very glad that it exists. Buy it. Read it. Whatever job you aspire to in the knowledge professions, it will be useful for you.

Alan McKee
Professor
Queensland University of Technology
2008

FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

Too often, there is seen to be a big divide between the academic study of the media and the professional skills required of job-ready journalists. The result is that a book such as this is rare. I was not expecting to find a way of providing my students with an introduction to key concepts and theoretical approaches to media studies as well as engage them with key journalism skills such as news gathering and interviewing in the same text. Yet, in the first edition of *Media and Journalism: New Approaches to Theory and Practice*, this is just what Nicola Goc, Liz Tynan and Jason Bainbridge so impressively brought together. Now with the welcome appearance of the second edition, they have again brought a range of theoretical lenses to bear on the media transformations of recent years and applied those insights to the practices of journalism.

The value of this as a way of learning is that the relationship between the academic history of the media, for example, and the current practice of a media interviewer, becomes something we can think about consciously and critically. Surely there has never been a more important time to do so. Our everyday lives are increasingly mediated. We have become more interactive and generative communicators than ever before and there is plenty of debate, considered in this volume, as to how meaningful any more is the difference between the professional and the amateur journalist or media producer. We appear

Foreword

to have so much choice. Without the intellectual tools—including a language—for critical reflection on the media practices in which more of us are engaging when once they were available to only a few, we literally have no way of thinking about such crucial questions as: What do we control and what is controlled for us (by corporate interests and values, for example)? What does privacy mean to us? What information do we really need and want, and who's giving it to us?

In giving readers these intellectual tools, through building knowledge of and reflection upon the histories and theories of the media and of journalism, this book encourages critical awareness of the implications of the transformations it documents and analyses, for journalism, for our personal and public lives and for society and culture. This book provides anyone working in the media and journalism or aspiring to do so with understanding and tools to do so. But to get out of it all that it offers, you the reader need to take up its challenges. Do it and you will benefit, no matter where in the media and journalism you hope to be.

Anne Dunn
Associate Professor
University of Sydney
2011

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Nicola Goc is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Media and Communications at the University of Tasmania. She has previously worked as a news journalist, feature writer, section editor and as a social and cultural historian. She appears regularly on ABC radio speaking about media and gender issues and cultural history. She is the author of several social history books and has also published widely on the representation of the 'deviant' woman in the media. She is the author of *Women, Infanticide and the Press 1822–1922* (2013). In 2014, she was a Fellow at the National Sound and Film Archive researching migrants in the media, and is currently working on a project on migration, the media, vernacular photography and female representation.

Liz Tynan is a Senior Lecturer at the James Cook University (JCU) Graduate Research School in Townsville, teaching academic writing and critical thinking skills to postgraduate students. She is a former journalism academic at both JCU and the University of Tasmania, and has a background in print and electronic media, and a long-standing speciality in science journalism and editing. She has worked for the ABC as a reporter and subeditor, and was later Sydney correspondent for *New Scientist*. Her research on the British nuclear tests in Australia will appear as a book in 2016.

Tim Dwyer is an Associate Professor at the University of Sydney. He teaches Legal and Ethical Issues in Media Practice to Masters students and is Degree Director of the Master of Media Practice. His research focuses on the critical evaluation of media and communications industries, regulation, media ethics and policy. His research also explores how news practices are evolving in multi-platform media organisations, and analyses the implications of these transformations for media diversity and pluralism. He is the author of *Legal and Ethical Issues in the Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), *Media Convergence* (Open University, 2010) and the co-editor (with Virginia Nightingale) of *New Media Worlds: Challenges for Convergence* (Oxford, 2007). Before moving to academia in 2002 he worked for the ABC (1981–89), and the federal government agencies responsible for privacy rights (1990–94), and electronic media regulation in Australia (1994–2002).

Sarah Gillman has worked in the Australian media for more than three decades, including work as a political and legal reporter, news editor, producer, researcher, broadcaster and freelance journalist. Most of her career has been with ABC radio and television, although she has also worked on commercial radio and newspapers. Sarah has taught journalism and media studies in tertiary institutions in Canberra, Darwin and Hobart. Her research interests include the relationship between victims and the media, and peer support within the media industry.

Carolyn Beasley is a Lecturer and Program Director of Writing at Swinburne University of Technology in Victoria, Australia. She teaches postgraduate journalism. Her award-winning writing and journalism has been published both nationally and internationally. She is also the author of the crime novel *The Fingerprint Thief* and a collection of short stories titled *The Memory of Marble*.

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Nicola Goc: The genesis for this book was discussions in the corridors and tearooms of the University of Tasmania between me, Jason Bainbridge, Liz Tynan and journalism and media colleagues. While Liz and Jason have moved on to different institutions, they have not only remained respected colleagues, but they are also my steadfast friends; I thank them both for their insight, their commitment to the third edition of this book and for their friendship. The editorial staff at Oxford University Press have been steadfast in their belief in this book and I wish to thank them for their support with special thanks to Shari and our editor Pete Cruttenden. Finally, none of us stand alone, and I wish to acknowledge and give my heartfelt thanks to my family: Roman, Tristan, Xavier, Jade and Sage, and in particular my mother Maureen Miller and sisters Angeliqne and Janine—you have always been there for me.

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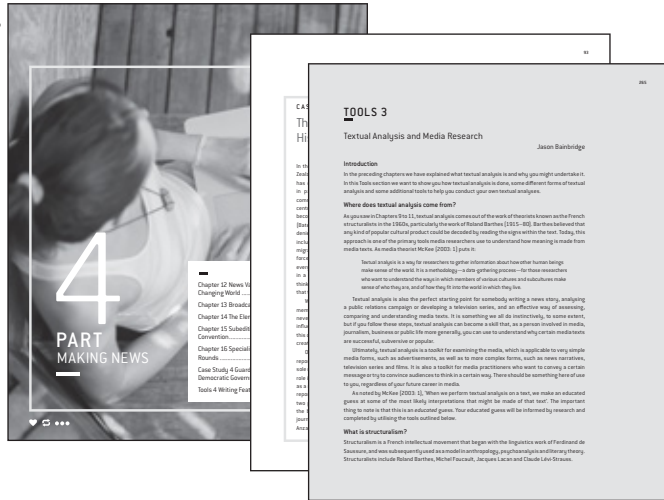
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GUIDED TOUR

The overall structure

This book is divided into five parts. Each part is built around an overarching theme and contains a number of chapters as well as a relevant Case Study and Tools.



Chapters

At the start of each chapter you will find a brief introduction to the chapter topic and an outline of what you will learn by reading the chapter. Chapters also feature a Key References list at the end, which provides you with the main sources of information relevant to the chapter.

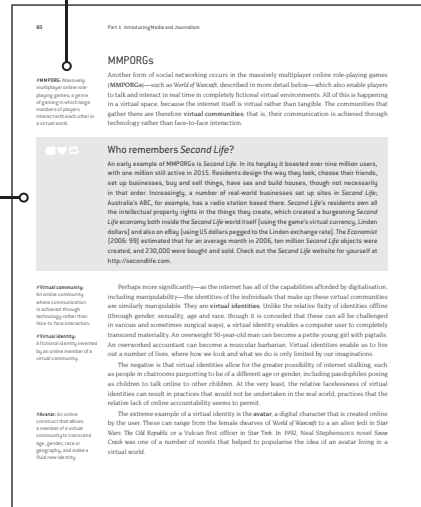


Visual and digital icons

These shaded boxes provide you with digital media, film and television examples to illustrate points made in the text.

Margin notes

Key terms are defined in the margins for quick and easy reference.



Illustrative examples

These interesting sidelines, professional tips and further examples are dotted throughout the chapter.

112 Part 2 Media Institutions

THE NEWS HOUR

The centrepiece of most television stations' scheduling is their news block, the idea being that if viewers watch the news they will stay with the network for the rest of that night's schedule. It also attracts a great deal of advertising revenue, particularly from high-end products such as cars. For many years in Australia, Channel Nine dominated with its news hour of *National News* and *A Current Affair* (from 6pm to 7pm). But over recent years, capitalising on the success of their morning news-entertainment show *Sunrise* and its evening bulletin *60 Minutes*, Channel Seven has been moving the news hour with *Seven News* and *60 Minutes* from 5pm to 7:30pm, a 5pm-6pm news bulletin targeting an older audience, 6pm with *George Negus* (promoted as offering depth and experience, and an alternative to the other channel's *60 Minutes*), a 6:30pm local news bulletin (again offering an alternative to the 6:30pm current affairs program) and the 7pm *Project*, targeting a younger audience, with a mix of news and feature. While *Project* continues to this day (having dropped the time reference from its name), the limited success of the rest of this schedule demonstrates how difficult it can be for networks to remain connected with their audiences.

- *Text can and television programmes exist as prior laboratories* (Barney & Handberg-Figuer 2004)
- It's not on the one track in ideas of nature, control and authority. Television trades in ways of representing the world and in ways of thinking about the world. Television becomes a way of looking out different ways of thinking about the world (see Chapter 10) by wedding theory (ideas with practice connections). This is especially apparent if we think about the variety of genres of television. Soap operas, for example, provide ideas of ethics ('How should I behave in this situation?'), science fiction works provide ideas of philosophy ('Who am I?' and 'What is my place in the universe?') and police series provide ideas of sociology ('How should society be organised?' and 'What is justice?')

WHAT ABOUT SMELL?

One of the things that strikes us whenever we visit a zoo is the smell: all these different smells from all these different animals. Television cannot replicate that — or can it? This is not a reference to Smell-O-Vision, but the idea that media products have distinctive odors. This idea, put forward by media theorist Stuart Hall, suggests that media products have 'odors' or elements that reveal their place in the world. They could be seen as particular locations or particular expressions. By contrast, an 'odorless' media product would be one where it is hard to know where it came from, because it is hard to identify any trace of its country of origin. Just as we can use smell as a tool to differentiate between animals, we can also use 'odour' on television to differentiate between, for example, US, British and Australian television programs.

Similar patterns of study

The study of news also parallels the study of television in other ways. Barney and Handberg-Figuer (2004: 40) note the study distinction between the word 'text', which focuses attention on the contents of the space (sociology), and the phrase 'sociological practice', which focuses attention on the 'space itself'.

Chapter 9 Media Texts 213

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Media texts offer a number of ways of representing the world.
- We can break down texts into units of meaning (signs), and can further break down signs into a physical element (the signifier) and a range of mental concepts (the signified or signposts).
- These spreads of signposts are called connotations.
- The most stable, verifiable and likely connotation is the denotation, usually determined by reference to the situation (the context) in which the text is found.
- Audiences are so media savvy, and make meaning from media texts so quickly, that it is almost an unconscious process.
- We refer to this process as reading a text.
- It is only through the process of analysing a text that we can slow down this process, which is what makes us aware of how meaning is made.
- Textual analysis is a three-stage process of breaking down the text, forming the text (considering how the text is presented) and the context in which the text is located, and looking at the relationship between texts.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a text?
- 2 Explain the relationship between signification and connotation.
- 3 How might denotation be 'misinterpreted'?
- 4 What is context?
- 5 Apply the three-stage process of textual analysis to some of the media texts you currently engage with (and maybe one or two you don't). What new insights did textual analysis provide into the text—and into yourself as an audience member?

KEY REFERENCES

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Thompson, T., Davis, L. & Miles, M. (2002) *Introducing Cultural and Media Studies: A Semiotic Approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Jason Bainbridge

Summary of key points
A bulleted summary at the end of each chapter highlights the key points of the chapter.

Revision and reflection questions
Revision and reflection questions are included at the end of every chapter to test your understanding of the material.

Tools
These are practical how-to guides that show you how to master a particular technique or apply practical skills within the media and journalism industry.

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TOOLS 3

Textual Analysis and Media Research

Jason Bainbridge

Introduction

In the preceding chapters we have explained what textual analysis is and why you might undertake it. In this Tools section we want to show you how textual analysis is done, some different forms of textual analysis and some additional tools to help you conduct your own textual analyses.

Where does textual analysis come from?

As you saw in Chapters 1 to 11, textual analysis comes out of the work of theorists known as the French structuralists in the 1920s, particularly the work of Roland Barthes (1915–80). Barthes believed that any kind of popular cultural product could be decoded by using the tools he had developed. This approach is one of the primary tools media researchers use to understand how meanings are made from media texts. As media theorist Morley (2003: 1) puts it:

Textual analysis is a way to researchers to gather information about how other humans bring make sense of the world. It is a methodology — a data-gathering process — for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of what they see, and what they think the world is like.

Textual analysis is also the perfect starting point for somebody writing a news story, analysing a public relations campaign or developing a television series, and an effective way of assessing, comparing and understanding media texts. It is something we do instinctively, to some extent, but if you follow these steps, textual analysis can become a skill that, in a precise technical sense, journalism, business or public life more generally, you can use to understand why certain media texts are successful, advertise or popular.

Ultimately, textual analysis is a toolkit for examining the media, which is applicable to very simple media forms, such as advertisements, as well as to more complex forms, such as news narratives, television series and films. It is also a toolkit for media practitioners who want to convey a certain message or try to convince audiences to think in a certain way. There should be something here of use to you, regardless of your future career in media.

As noted by Lee (2003: 1), 'When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an important guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text.' The important thing to note is that this is an educated guess. Your educated guess will be informed by research and completed by utilising the tools outlined below.

What is structuralism?

Structuralism is a French intellectual movement that began with the linguistics work of Ferdinand de Saussure, and was subsequently used as a central methodology, paradigm and tool in many other things. Structuralists include Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

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CASE STUDY 1

The First World War, Journalism as the First Draft of History and the Making of the Anzac Legend

Nicola Goo

In the century since those war-gone Australia and New Zealand troops scaled the cliffs at Gallipoli, the media has continued to sustain the Anzac legend. We saw this in particular during the centenary of 'First World War commemorations' in 2015. The Anzac legend lies at the centre of Australian identity and in recent years has become a sacred, unshakable element of national pride (Bate 2013). Yet the perpetuation of the Anzac legend denies many Australians a role in the national narrative, including Indigenous Australians, women and postwar migrants (even though Aboriginal men enlisted in the armed forces and women served as nurses). At a time when as every four of us were born (or have parents who were born) in a country outside of Australia, why do we continue to think of ourselves as a nation in terms of one military action that took place a century ago?

While the broader issue of the media and Anzac memorialisation is not the focus of this case study, it is nevertheless worthy of discussion in the context of media influence, the creation of history and the Anzac story. In this case study we look at the role journalism played in the creation of the Anzac legend.

Only a handful of accredited Australian journalists reported on the action at Gallipoli in 1915, but they were the sole media source of public information and played a central role in the formation of how Australia thought about itself as a nation in the post-colonial era. 'From these journalists' reports, the Anzac myth was formed and developed around two parallel themes: the unique Australian character and the birth of a nation. However, it was not an Australian journalist who planned the saas that was to become the Anzac myth but an Englishman, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

This study briefly examines the work of three Australian journalists reporting from Turkey: Ashmead-Bartlett (1881–1931) and Australians C.W. Bean (1879–1958) and Keith Murdoch (1888–1952). The writing of Ashmead-Bartlett and Bean was highly influential in shaping the Anzac legend, while it was the actions of Ashmead-Bartlett and Keith Murdoch that had a direct influence on the course of the war for Australia and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli.

Censorship

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Federal Government introduced the War Precautions Act 1914 under which censorship controls were implemented and media censorship was extended to press coverage of both domestic and international events. Under the Act there was a centralising of power in the government and its authorities, and for journalists and editors the imposition of wartime censorship was a source of frustration. For the duration of the war Australian correspondents were subjected to several layers of censorship: field censorship (by the army), British government censorship (from the War Office in London) and Australian government censorship (under the War Precautions Act 1914). The Australian press complained constantly that the appointed censors had no real understanding of the newspaper industry. The Argus outlined the problem on 29 December 1914, pointing out that those chosen as censors had 'no training and possess no aptitude' for dealing with newspaper work, which they do not in the least understand' and frequently 'showed ludicrous ignorance ... and some of them have in the best notion of when to censor or how' (Broadbent 2009; Argus, 29 December 1914: 4).

Case studies
These focused examples illustrate the application of key concepts in real life.

INTRODUCTION

Why a 3.0 edition?

As practitioners and theorists in media and journalism, we are operating in one of the most dynamic sectors of society and there have been few more dynamic eras than the one we are living through now.

In the seven years since the first edition of this book was published much has changed in the media environment—and some things have stayed the same. There is a good chance, for example, that you are now reading this book in an iBook format on your tablet, that any of the examples we refer to are only a mouse click away, that you are being monitored by a camera or other geolocative device as you read and that by the time we reach the end of this sentence, over twelve hours of content will have been uploaded to YouTube (at the rate of one hour per second).

You can now produce your own media. Every new tweet is a new web page. Indeed, even if you don't use Twitter but have a Facebook page or a blog, or ever uploaded photos or video clips, you are a media producer.

Since the second edition was published, media convergence has become commonplace. Popular cultural products—such as BBC's *Doctor Who* or Disney's *Star Wars* franchises—regularly incorporate web content, games, downloads and DVD extras into their distribution, while fans of the original series (Steven Moffat and J.J. Abrams, respectively) are now responsible for these franchises' ongoing production; the consumers have become producers. News programs, such as ABC's *Q&A*, also incorporate Twitter and Skype into their structure, creating a live, interactive audience no longer bounded by a studio.

And the changes continue as new technologies are developed and the way we use these technologies continues to push the boundaries of human communication. The rapid spread of camera-enabled mobile phones worldwide has seen the 'selfie' become a global phenomenon. In 2013 the word 'selfie' was Oxford English Dictionary's word of the year and the selfie stick voted the 'gift of the year' for Christmas 2014. 'If you don't take a selfie it didn't happen' has become a catchphrase, though those uploading selfies at the scene of the Sydney Lindt Café Siege in December 2014 were widely condemned.

We have seen the continuing use of social media as a tool for protest in Hong Kong, Ukraine and the Middle East, and its use at times of natural disaster as a way of communicating the scale of a crisis and to let loved ones know that people are safe. We have seen how media can be hijacked by terrorist organisations like ISIS, and the benefits and issues that come with the erosion of personal privacy in the all-pervasive digital space.

In the sphere of popular culture, Kim Kardashian, Marvel Studios and 'trending' have embedded themselves. *The Simpsons* has endured. Lego has become the biggest brand on the planet. Free-to-air digital television channels have proliferated, digital radio has arrived, 3D cinema has become successful and illegal downloading has become commonplace. Indeed, the ways in which we consume content have fundamentally changed with the rise of streaming services such as iView, Netflix, Amazon Instant, Hulu and HBO Go, along with the ongoing issue of piracy.

All these examples, and many more, are manifestations of the awesome Media 2.0 paradigm shift that drives consumers, producers and the products themselves to be seen, experienced, debated, assimilated, snapchatted, tagged, tweeted and streamed.

So why Media 3.0? Broadly speaking we can map media across two distinct eras. Media 1.0 (a retronym) refers to a period of time when one-to-many communication was conducted by media organisations using a select range of media (including print, film and television) to address large audiences. Media 2.0 refers to the increasing prevalence of user-generated content and the move towards many-to-many communication where every person in a media network can now broadcast and/or receive images, audio and video to as many or as few people as they like. There is no exact point in time when this changeover occurred (media always had the capacity to be participatory, as media theorist Marshall McLuhan pointed out back in the 1970s), but the shift was certainly expedited and enabled by advances in digital technology.

More recently, some academics and commentators have begun to discuss the possibility of a new shift, towards Media 3.0. At the core of this idea is the notion of the semantic web, where the algorithms underlying search engines will create relationships between separate pieces of data to provide context and meaning, and thus reflect the likes and interests of the user. Here, choice will be sacrificed for simplicity. You like Lady Gaga? Here is her entire back catalogue, glowing reviews and images of all of her fashions. You vote for the Liberal Party? Here are links to Twitter accounts for prominent party politicians, where to join, what books to read ... you get the idea. Media 3.0 will place users at the centre of their own individual mediaspheres, tailored to their passions and shaped by their concerns, where everything that interests you is on demand—but *only* the things that interest you. Nothing contrary to how you think. Nothing you have already expressed a strong dislike or distaste for.

Unlike Media 2.0, Media 3.0 remains largely hypothetical at this stage. It's been talked about for almost ten years now. Indeed, there are just as many academics and commentators who decry its existence as support it. But whether you treat it as part of Media 2.0, a natural outgrowth or a paranoid concern, the traces of what we might call Media 3.0 are already here. Search engines that pre-empt your needs. Ads that match what you have previously searched for. The erosion of privacy. The splintering of mass audiences into niche audiences. The loss of the public. And as we will explore throughout this edition, this has enormous ramifications for media industries, the public sphere (and public debate) and, perhaps most significantly, journalism. For journalism is all about informing the public about issues and stories that otherwise may be unknown to them, and that challenge them or make them think differently—ideas that may necessarily be excluded (or more difficult to find) in a Media 3.0 world.

Hence the Media 3.0 edition: to map the seismic changes under way that contribute to this shift, while emphasising the timeless skills and knowledge bases that set the high-quality media and journalism practitioner apart from the dabbler or the hack—regardless of the form media will take in the future.

To an extent, this book remains based on David Gauntlett's idea of Media Studies 2.0 in the sense that we view you all as empowered users of media. That's one of the reasons we talk about media *and* journalism. In many respects, the skill sets we refer to as journalistic are active ways of putting media theories into practice. You may also notice that while there are lots of references to other media in this book, there are relatively few pictures. This is because we want you to use this book in connection with the media around you; as part of a conversation rather than a lecture. When we talk about television, see if you can stream the program. Listen to music on your iPod. Tweet your thoughts. Search magazines, newspapers and websites for the stories we discuss. We want this to be a truly immersive experience,

as individual for you as possible, and while we do point to certain key texts, we also want to encourage you to make your own links and analyse your own texts with the tools we provide you with. All of the references we make are available online and you should be able to access most media content via sites such as YouTube. Don't just passively read this text. Be active, follow connections and make links.

To that end we've upgraded all of the information herein, added new material, created new case studies and archived all of our previous case studies online. Furthermore, we have additional web content for all of our sections.

Who is this book for?

Since its launch, this book has become many things to many people and in this 3.0 edition we have sought to be just as inclusive, recognising the broad and encompassing nature of so many media and communication professions. So this third edition of *Media and Journalism: New Approaches to Theory and Practice* will be suitable for anyone interested in media and journalism and the relationship between them; for example:

- undergraduate students
- postgraduate students wanting a refresher course or an accessible introduction to new areas of study
- educators in journalism and/or media wanting to know more about the other area
- early career journalists wondering what to do, and how to do it, now that they have finished their studies
- early career media practitioners who are in a similar position
- citizen journalists and media producers wishing to better understand contemporary media practice and theory
- social media managers for companies large and small
- people already working in media who are thinking of changing their career path in some way (from print to electronic media, or journalism to PR, or magazine editor to blogger, for example)
- journalists generally
- people working in PR generally
- media practitioners generally
- people interested in communications
- people in public life who want to understand how media and journalism work.

We have written this with you in mind, making it as accessible and interesting as we can. The ideas in here may be complex, but we have set out to express them as clearly and entertainingly as possible. We hope that you will find this book not only interesting to read, but also fun.

Why should you be interested?

As media forms continue to converge, and the line between entertainment and news becomes harder to define, it is important for people working in media and journalism to have knowledge of the theories and practices that inform media as a whole. This book is designed to be an authoritative and easy-to-follow introductory text that does not abstract journalism or PR from the rest of the media, but rather considers and interrogates their roles in media through theory and practice. We want you to understand how your profession works in the larger context, and, equally, how those skills typically labelled as 'journalistic' are transferable into different jobs within media.

How is this book different from most of the other media and journalism books?

This book is about media *and* journalism, not media *or* journalism, or media with a hint of journalism, or journalism with a vague reference to the public sphere somewhere towards the end. This is because in the 21st century an ‘editorial act’ can be found among the millions of amateur bloggers as well as the tens of thousands of professional journalists (Deuze 2009). In the era of Media 2.0, the divisions between media and journalism have become virtually non-existent already. In Media 3.0 any such distinction will entirely disappear. So this is a book about the relationship between media and journalism, and how a study of one can inform the study of the other. Building on the work of leading theorists and practitioners, this book integrates media theory with journalistic practice, providing you with a complete introduction to media and journalism by drawing on current theories of the media as well as providing practical instruction on how to write journalistic pieces that put these theories into practice.

How is this book organised?

The book is divided into five parts—from an overview of what we mean by media and journalism, to histories and analyses of the media industries that produce them, to the tools we use for analysing media, to the ways in which we produce news and other media content, to the social contexts within which they function, now and into the future—providing a complete handbook of communication. You can therefore follow the flow of information and ideas from news production through to dissemination and negotiation, which will reveal how important media and journalism studies are to each other.

Each part is divided into chapters addressing the major areas of study, which introduce you to the theoretical debates and specialist vocabulary of each area, a case study that demonstrates some of these theories in practice and a tools section that offers practical training relevant to each area, through which you can engage with these theories yourselves, and put theory into practice. In this new edition, we have included new features, revision and reflection questions, and chapter summaries that will help you to consolidate your learning and ensure that your knowledge of the contents of each chapter can be extended and deepened. Furthermore, the chapters, case studies and tools sections are supplemented by web content, including alternative case studies, tutorial exercises, additional examples and assessments.

Built around the notion of the public sphere, the book explores how the history of journalism informs the construction of modern media practice and the democratisation of knowledge. News is the entry point of new information into the public sphere where it is negotiated, debated and exchanged. From there we follow how these ideas are disseminated and commodified (by the media industries, with particular emphasis on new media), analysed and constructed (through media analysis and journalistic writing and editing), framed and discussed (through ethical and legal frameworks) and, finally, contextualised and debated (through convergence and postmodernity).

What this textbook does differently is to bring together media and journalism studies in an interdisciplinary way that sees journalism and news texts as media products that can be considered in relation to other media products, such as television dramas, films and soap operas.

What do we mean by media?

For this book we define media as content and distribution mechanisms through which information and/or entertainment are transmitted. They can be publicly or privately owned, developed with advances in technology and are often economically profitable.

Some things to remember about media:

- Strictly speaking, the term ‘media’ refers to *anything* through which *something else* can be transmitted.
- We are using the above definition because we will be looking at specific types of media: what are often referred to as *the media* or *mass media*; that is, message transmitters designed to attract the greatest number of audience members, such as newspapers, television, film, radio and the internet.
- This means that the types of media we will be looking at are all involved in *communication*. As Hirst and Harrison (2007: x) note, the crucial difference between communication and media is that ‘communication is the process of sending and receiving messages ... media are the means of communication and transmission’. Media are therefore the mechanisms through which we communicate with other people.
- Media are called *media* because they are literally in the middle (*media* means *middle* in Latin). They are the mechanisms that stand between the sender and the receiver of messages, the mechanisms that convey messages between the sender and receiver.
- Journalism is therefore a crucially important media form, as it is involved in the transmission of news (quite literally, ‘new information’), whether that is news about the fall of a government, a terrorist bombing or about a celebrity, a new album or a sporting match.
- *Media* is the plural of *medium*: something through which something else can be transmitted. For example, a psychic medium claims to be able to transmit messages between the living and the dead, and an electrical cable is a medium of transmitting electricity to appliances in your home. Similarly, a newspaper, a Facebook page or a film transmits information and/or entertainment to an audience. Any one of these would be a medium. In total we call them media.
- In this book, when we refer to a specific type of media we will call it a *media form*, such as television or radio. In Part 3, we break down these media forms further into *media texts*, *signs* and *signifiers/signifieds*, all of which are defined in their appropriate chapters (look out for the handy definitions in the book’s margins).
- Only rarely do we refer to media as *mass media* (a term you’re probably familiar with), for two reasons. First, it carries the connotation of the audience being an undifferentiated lump, whereas, in truth, the various members of ‘mass audiences’ can behave in very different ways, based on age, gender, race or a host of social, cultural and economic factors. Second, the era of the mass media is fragmenting, because of the rapid development and implementation of *digital media* (a term that we will define later, but which encompasses the internet, social media, games and mobile phones) and the *convergence* (also defined later) of various media forms. Whereas *mass media* was once used, quite correctly, as a term that differentiated media industries from the telecommunications industry (because the telecommunications industry was seen as a one-to-one industry and other media industries as one-to-many) during the Media 1.0 era, a combination of convergence and new media innovations has meant that media as a whole can no longer be thought of as ‘mass’. Instead, person-to-person and many-to-many communication is most common, and the boundaries between

audiences and producers are less defined. These changes, which form a running theme of this book, are examined in more detail in Chapters 4 and 20.

- The importance of digital media will be made clear in Chapter 4, but you should be aware that as the advances in media (technological and otherwise, which are frequently referred to as ‘new’ media) are so widespread that digital and social media will be considered in most chapters throughout the book.

Who is a media practitioner?

A **media practitioner** is anyone involved in the production of media. They can include graphic designers, producers, broadcasters, actors, scriptwriters, audio technicians, public relations officers, spin doctors, bloggers, website designers and journalists.

What do we mean by ‘journalism’?

Journalism is the gathering and disseminating of new information about current events, trends, issues and people to a wide audience. Journalism academic Barbie Zelizer (2005) argues that it is unsatisfactory to define journalism as a profession, an industry, an institution or a craft. She says that journalism has to be ultimately understood as a culture. Journalism can be defined by the practice of journalists, but for those aspiring to become journalists, a definition that goes beyond ‘journalism is what journalists do’ is required.

Journalism came out of the creation of a public sphere in which ideas and information could be disseminated, negotiated, debated and exchanged. The Greek *agora*, the Roman Forum, and the European coffee houses all provided the space in which the basic principles of journalism evolved. Through often vigorous (and sometimes fatal) discussions that worked out the principles of checks and balances on truth-telling, point-of-view and accuracy, a consensus was reached on what the citizens would accept as accurate information upon which they could act:

- The fundamental principles of journalism are the respect for truth and the public’s right to information.
- It is often said that journalism is the first draft of history, because journalists record important historical events as they are happening.
- Journalism informs a global community of current and future events that have an impact on everyone on the planet: from global warming, war or the threat of a tsunami to global economic downturn and global terrorism.
- Journalism also disseminates information about the day-to-day detail of ordinary life within our immediate community, such as changes to the bus timetables, increases in rates and taxes, the success or failure of a local sporting team and the death of a prominent citizen.

What is a journalist?

While Zelizer’s cultural definition of journalism covers a wide field, those aspiring to a career as a journalist most likely want to know just what a journalist does.

A journalist is a person who practices journalism; someone who gathers and disseminates new information to a wider audience about current events, trends, people and issues. The word ‘journalist’ is taken from the French *journal*, which comes from the Latin term *diurnal* (‘daily’).

Media practitioner: Any person involved in the production of media.

Journalism: The gathering and disseminating of new information to a wide audience about current events, trends, issues and people.

Our understanding of the role of a journalist often comes not only from news bulletins and newspapers, but also from films, novels and comics—surely the ultimate heroic journalist is the comic-strip character Clark Kent, the *Daily Planet* reporter who combats evil as Superman. We've all seen in films and television the stereotypical Hollywood journalist hero, the hard-bitten, cynical reporter up against a corrupt world. Harry Shearer's succinct tongue-in-cheek definition captures the stereotypical journalist of old: 'He's a hard-drinking, soft-spoken, burn-up-some-shoe-leather, sort of son-of-a-gun who's seen it all before, and can't wait to see it all again.'

This image is a far cry from reality. For a start, at least half of all working journalists today are female, and most journalists use telecommunications technology rather than shoe leather to gather information. They may start as bloggers, or on Twitter, or just using their Facebook page to tell stories. And occupational health and safety rules have put an end to the whisky bottle in the bottom drawer.

Unlike most other professions and trades, there is no professional body that registers journalists—so anyone can claim to be a journalist, which prompts the question: 'What is a journalist?'

The ideal journalist

Just as the fundamental principles of journalism are respect for truth and the public's right to know, a journalist's first obligation is to the truth and their loyalty is to the public. Journalists must also:

- act independently from those they report on
- operate under a value system—a code of ethics—such as the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance/Australian Journalists Association (MEAA/AJA) Code of Ethics. The MEAA/AJA Code tells us that:

Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities.

All journalists are writers, which is why we devote space in this book to the forms of journalistic expression and the foundations of English grammar.

Ideally, journalists are also concerned with the pursuit of objectivity, and they operate within an environment that should have in place checks and balances ensuring that their journalism is balanced, fair and accurate.

News journalists:

- work differently from the way other journalists work; they are at the front line of the Fourth Estate (see Chapter 3), and act as watchdogs over government and others who wield power
- report on the news of the day that has greatest impact on the community
- report on all levels of political and public life: police matters, the courts, health and welfare, and on financial, environmental and other social issues deemed to be of public importance
- give us the information that enables us to make decisions about the way we live: timely and accurate information that is in our interest to know.

Part 4 provides you with the essential skills you will need to work as a journalist, while there are parts of other sections of this book that will give you essential information on the role of the journalist in society and the role and impact of journalism in the 21st century.

What is the difference between hard news and soft news?

News journalists can find themselves working at two very different ends of the news spectrum, sometimes for the same organisation. A journalist may work on an infotainment-style program for the electronic media (a job that also covers hard news and investigative stories), on a newspaper that has both hard and soft news sections, or on a magazine where both styles of news are published. Hard and soft news indicate a difference in the standards for news values (see Chapter 12).

Hard news

Hard news, closest to the ideal of the Fourth Estate, is associated with the notion of a free press and to the public's right to know. Hard news stories aim to inform the community about events and happenings, and provide citizens with the information they require to be able to participate in the democratic process as fully informed citizens.

Hard news journalists gather and disseminate new information to the public in the interests of animating democracy. Hard news covers topics such as politics, crime, law, environment, conflict, war, disasters, welfare, health, social justice, economics, science and technology.

Hard news needs to be conveyed in a timely manner and cover *current* events. People need to be informed about the most recent developments. The advent of twenty-four-hour-a-day news, digital media and the World Wide Web have made this imperative a lot easier to deliver.

New media (see Part 4, Case Study 5 and Tools 5) is providing new opportunities—and new challenges—for news journalists: to blog and tweet or not to blog and tweet? Should journalists use social networking services for sourcing? Journalists working in all platforms today, and even more so in the future, will need to be adept at posting stories on multiple platforms. These new demands, at a time when staff numbers are being reduced, place new pressures on journalists. But new media also offer new opportunities for collaboration between journalists and media organisations and the public in the creation of news.

News can now be broken within moments of it happening by anyone with the ability to upload images and text from their smart phone to the internet through platforms such as Twitter, Instagram or Facebook. At the most basic level we as consumers don't need traditional news platforms—newspapers, radios or televisions—to consume news. The competition for newspaper readers from online sources has, as we all know, impacted on the viability of newspapers. As the old adage goes, why pay for something that is free? This is the ideology that has devastated the music and newspaper industries.

News, like pirated music, is available for free on the internet and the creation of pay walls has to date not provided a viable business model. The irony is that it is often the online editions of traditional capital city newspapers and broadcasters that remain popular sources for news (particularly at times of important breaking news when audiences seek out traditional reliable sources) that has contributed to the destruction of the traditional news business model. This importantly also speaks to society continuing to value reliable quality journalism.

And the fact that we no longer even need to sit at a computer to access news is dramatically changing what news looks like. With a tablet or iPad, smartphone or iPhone, we can consume news anywhere there is a mobile service and the smaller mobile devices, along with the development of social media, means we want to consume news in very different formats. We are more interested in getting our news from social media and blogs than ever before. And this means professional journalists are no longer the only gatekeepers of the news and information we consume. Their privileged access to expert sources of news is being eroded by these sources now speaking directly to audiences through their own blogs and websites.

But the sheer volume of information on the web could also offer a new opportunity for journalism. We are all time-poor and look to trusted others to make sense of complex issues in all aspect of our lives. The sheer speed and volume of information that is being delivered to us through out mobile devices is overwhelming. And just as we still turn to traditional sources at times of crisis, there is an opportunity for professional journalism to sift through the tsunami of information and provide the public with fast, accurate and verifiable news in formats the public wants. Journalism also has a role to play in the delivery of digital news and information within the new model of collaborative journalism, a partnership between news journalists and consumers as producers. This model is moving beyond the simple citizen led gate-watching action, of flagging news content without adding any significant new insights, to consumers collaborating with news journalists and adding their own content, insight, knowledge and expertise.

And then along comes a phenomenon such as WikiLeaks (see Chapter 3). WikiLeaks is an organisation that solicits, vets and distributes leaked documents via the web. Through its collaboration with several influential newspapers around the world, it is providing a new model for journalism and has arguably become the most significant development in journalism to date in the 21st century. It has reinvigorated the public's interest, on a global scale, in the right to an unfettered press—free from government and industry interference—and the public's right to be informed. And it has provided optimism among those who believe in the importance of a strong and effective Fourth Estate. Indeed, many believe Julian Assange's mission to keep governments and the powerful accountable provides a way forward for journalism and the Fourth Estate in the digital, global environment.

Soft news

Soft news, generally defined as news that does not have a high priority in the news values scale, encompasses such issues as entertainment, sport, lifestyle, human interest, celebrity and the arts (although all of these issues can also be the focus of hard news stories). Soft news is also sometimes called *infotainment* (see also Chapter 2 and Part 4). Governments are rarely brought down by soft news stories, and countries do not go to war over the exposure of a sporting scandal. Soft news does not have the same imperative for timeliness as hard news, and is usually generated by the journalist's or editor's curiosity rather than an event.

The division between soft news and hard news has blurred significantly in recent years with the proliferation of celebrity and entertainment news entering the hard news sections of newspapers and news bulletins.

Today tension frequently exists between traditional hard news journalists and those in media management who have more of an eye on the revenue flows from delivering infotainment and soft news. By way of example, in America Mika Brzezinski, a news presenter with *Morning Joe* on MSNBC

#Soft news: News (sometimes called infotainment) that does not have a high priority in the news values scale, and encompasses such fields as entertainment, sport, lifestyle, human interest, celebrity and the arts.

television, refused to lead her bulletin with the latest Paris Hilton story about the celebrity socialite's release from prison before reports on Iraq and developments at the White House. In the first bulletin she screwed up the script and refused to read it; in the second bulletin she took a co-presenter's cigarette lighter and tried to burn the script; and in the third bulletin on air she took it straight to the shredder in the studio and fed it into the machine. Ms Brzezinski told viewers: 'I hate it and I don't think it should be our lead. I just don't believe in covering that story, at least not as the lead story on the newscast, when we have a day like today.' Within a day 250,000 people had viewed Ms Brzezinski's actions on YouTube. Hundreds of viewers posted positive comments, including 'This lady has some serious balls and some serious morals.'

This recent trend, which has seen soft news making its way into hard news spaces in print and in the electronic media, is called the **tabloidisation** of news. (A tabloid is a newspaper that is compact in size. Its content is usually considered to be less serious than broadsheet newspapers. Tabloid news focuses on the sensational and privileges such subjects as crime, sex, scandal and sport, with an informal vernacular delivery.) This does not mean that it is not of value to readers and viewers. While most citizens demand to be informed by a free press about matters that have an impact on their lives within a democratic state, they may also be just as interested in the sporting results or entertainment news. One person may privilege business news over entertainment news, and another may privilege lifestyle news over politics. All of this news comes together to fulfil another aim of journalism—to describe society to itself in all of its complexity.

Dan Okrent, editor of new media for *Time Inc.*, believes that journalists have to be aware of what their audiences want. He says journalists remove themselves from their audiences when they take themselves too seriously. While he believes that, as the public's eyes and ears, journalists are obliged to be honest, accurate and fair, he says that 'sometimes to be a journalist is to report on the new colours for living room sofas' or to 'report on whether the television star is really happy with his new girlfriend'. He says there are things to do with entertainment and conversation that provide a connection with readers and viewers at a different level.

J-bloggers

Are bloggers journalists? The internet enables any of us to publish our writing, but does that mean that every self-published writer is a journalist? **J-bloggers** are those who use the medium of the internet, subscribe to the journalistic ideals of an obligation to the truth and the public's right to information, act independently from those they report on, operate under a value system (such as a code of ethics), scrutinise those in power, and search, disclose, record, question and entertain. That is, they can be regarded as web journalists, whether they are paid professionals or citizen journalists (see Chapter 3).

Nicola Goc, who coined the term, argues that J-bloggers, working within new media, have reclaimed some of the old traditions of a free and independent press by reporting without fear or favour. They have brought new energy and innovation to journalism, they are breathing new life into the old practices and, along with their colleagues working in the traditional media of newspapers, television and radio, they are providing the oxygen for 21st-century democracy.

What is public relations?

Public relations (PR) is the promotion of a product, idea, event or person with the intention of creating goodwill for it. PR can be many different things, some not necessarily closely connected with marketing. A PR person might work for a charity or a non-government organisation, working to create awareness of

a particular social or environmental issue, for example. Or a PR person might be part of the corporate communication team of a leading international company with quite a different set of priorities. In a general sense, you can say that the profession is interested in relationships: reducing conflict and improving cooperation. In the corporate sector, this can certainly serve the marketing objectives of a company to create a receptive environment for the marketing of products. In the government sector, it can help sell policies and ideas and change behaviours in various ways; for example, the various public relations campaigns around health issues or domestic violence. In the community or non-government sectors, it can establish useful social connections or spread new knowledge for the benefit of various communities. PR really deals in the flow of information, in many varieties and forms. According to the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA): 'Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics.'

PR is a huge and growing part of the public sphere, a sector that (rightly or wrongly) promulgates much of the information that passes through the media. While journalists do not always feel comfortable with the proximity of PR to their own profession, the two fields do work together closely and fruitfully. Journalists regularly cross over to 'the dark side' to become PR practitioners. A significant portion of media content is generated in PR offices.

Theorists in the PR field see the rise of the profession as one way that public sphere communication has improved in recent decades, indicating that organisations large and small have recognised the importance of clear articulation of who they are and what they do. However, others feel that the influence of PR has gone too far, taking society into the murky realms of information manipulation and spin. Views on the exact place of PR in the media sphere continue to be disputed and contested.

While its reach and influence may be cause for disquiet among members of the Fourth Estate, it is possible for journalists and other media professionals to engage with public relations practitioners in positive and productive ways.

Mutual mistrust between public relations professionals and the media is unhelpful, and in many ways unnecessary. Finding ways to develop positive relationships is the theme of Chapter 8, while Chapter 17 canvasses some of the pitfalls in the relationship between journalism and public relations, and suggests ways through the ethical minefields. Tools 2 gives practical advice on how to run an effective media conference.

Academic approaches to journalism

While journalism has been taught at Australian and New Zealand universities for more than eighty years, traditionally most journalists gained their training on the job through a cadetship. Today, however, the entry-level requirement for a cadet journalist is a university degree.

Academic approaches to journalism have traditionally come from a number of disciplines, and focused on whichever aspect of journalism is most interesting to that particular discipline:

- Sociological studies of journalism tend to focus not only on the journalist's role in society, but also on the practices of journalism, from studies on the selectivity of stories and gatekeeping through to ethnographies of the newsroom and ideological studies of the institution of journalism. The ideas of *gatekeeping* and *news culture* come from this tradition.

- Historical studies of journalism tend to analyse the impact of journalism at micro, mid and macro levels, through analyses of memoirs and biographies, periods and events, and the development of the nation-state. This approach is reflected in Chapters 2 and 3.
- Language studies of journalism tend to look at journalism in the context of semiology, content analysis, framing and discourse analysis; all forms of textual analysis that are used in media studies as well. These concepts are defined in more detail in Tools 3.
- Political science studies of journalism tend to look at the relationships between journalism, politics and power, particularly around sourcing practices and the role of the journalist. To some extent, the idea of journalism as the Fourth Estate [Chapter 3] has been shaped and developed through a political science perspective.
- Cultural studies approaches to journalism tend to analyse the forms journalism can take, the ways in which journalists are represented and the relationship between journalists and audiences. Again, this clearly intersects with media studies, and directly informs our study of a variety of journalistic forms and our use of the term *representation*.

Why is it important for journalists to know about media?

In Australia, this question has been at the centre of a debate between journalists and media academics since the 1990s. The debate is popularly known as the ‘media wars’. Several prominent writers have argued that media theory is of no practical use to would-be journalists (Flew & Sternberg 1999; Windschuttle 2000; Flew, Sternberg & Adams 2007). These writers point to the number of media courses offered by commercial providers that make no mention of ‘theory’ (see Flew 2008 for more on this) as evidence that the sector does not require knowledge of theory.

However, once you have graduated from university and are out there seeking a career in journalism or the media, you will need to be work-ready. You will need to have a very strong portfolio—and preferably one that shows skills across more than one type of media. That’s why you may choose to study journalism from many different perspectives: print, radio, television, photojournalism and online. To be able to put these skills into practice, you will also need to gain an understanding of professional practice within a global media sphere, understand the ethical practice of journalism and public relations, and understand the role of journalism in contemporary society within the broader media sphere. In summary, you will need to have a comprehensive knowledge of the 21st-century media environment.

More specifically, you should know about media because:

- with the ongoing erosion between information and entertainment, news and entertainment, and hard news and soft news, it becomes conceptually important to know about *all* areas of media so you can adapt, resist or at least recognise these erosions as they occur
- you will need to understand how your profession works in the larger context of media
- you will need to understand the theories and concepts behind what you are doing in practice
- you will need to acquire knowledge of a variety of media concepts and practices to make it easy for you if you wish to change media jobs at some point in your working life (such as moving from print to electronic, journalism to PR, or journalism to dramatic scriptwriting) or if you are an academic who wishes to teach in interdisciplinary programs.

Media, journalism, culture and society: the broad relationships

How can we best study the broad relationships between media, journalism, culture and society? We study these relationships by applying theory. For the purposes of this book we define theory as the body of rules, ideas, principles and techniques that apply to a particular subject, as distinct from actual practice.

Theory is not something that is solely the province of academics. Theories range from how to find the best tomatoes, to who will win the football grand final, to how to pick up a date at a club, to Lyotard's theories of postmodernity (see Chapter 20).

Theory in itself is not an evaluative term. A taxi driver's theory that Martians killed President Kennedy can be as theoretical as Cunningham and Turner's theories regarding the operation of the media in Australia. What makes one theory better than another—or more persuasive than another, or having what we may term more academic rigour than another—are two further factors: methodology and evidence. We discuss both of these in Tools 3.

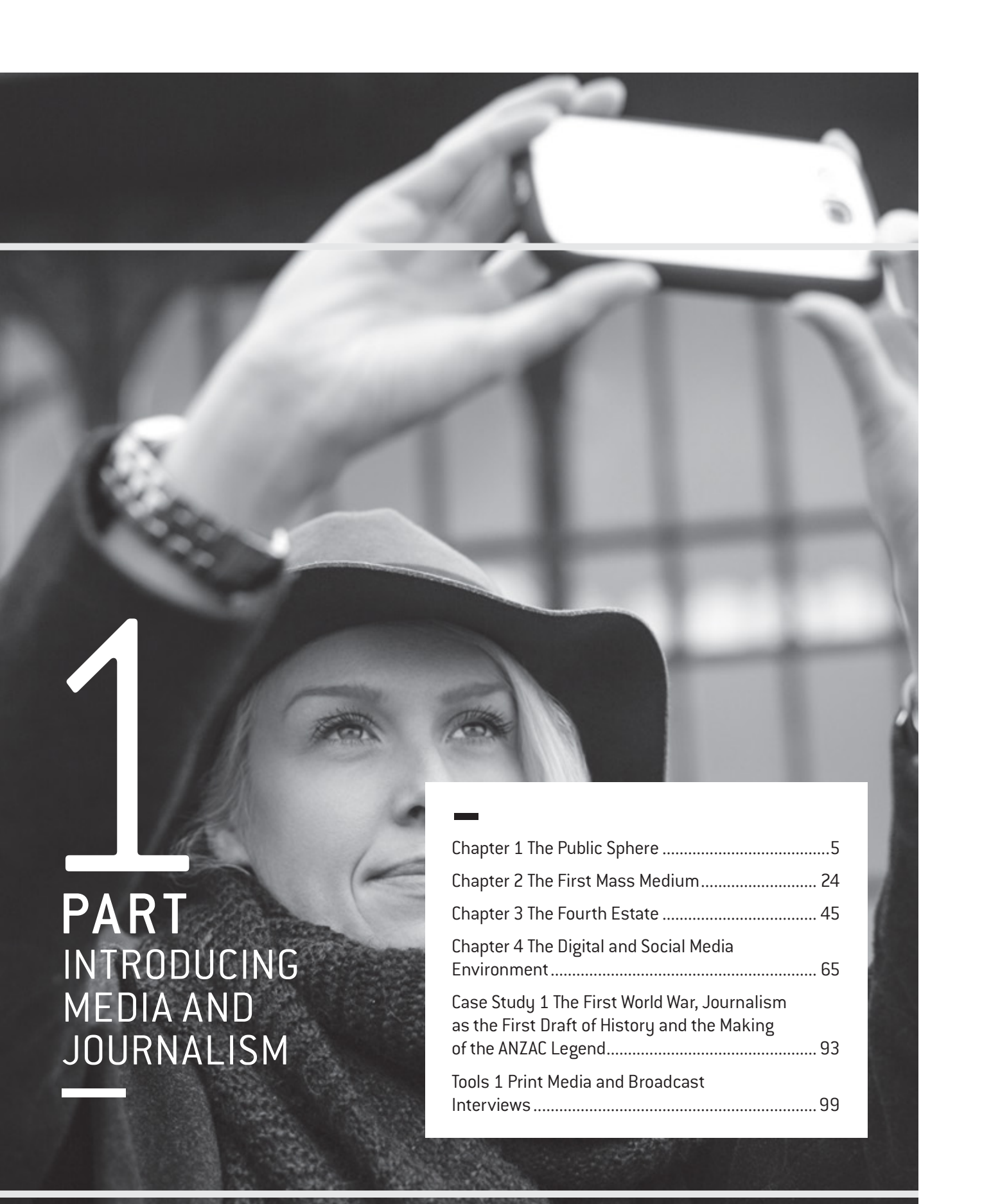
It is worth noting that not everyone defines theory in this way. Some people would reserve theory for the academy, and would claim that theory does have certain requirements that differentiate it from 'old wives' tales', 'beliefs' or 'conspiracy theories'. But we prefer to separate theory, methodology and evidence. It demystifies theory as a term, and reveals the ways in which we can all contribute theoretically, regardless of whether we are part of the academy or not.

Furthermore, we follow the lead of Gunther Kress (1997) in proposing that theory works best in combination with practice, moving away from theory as abstract critique towards a model of practice-led theory that is more interested in revealing how meaning is made through representation and design. Therefore, you shouldn't be frightened or distrustful of theory, but rather use it as a tool to develop your own work in new and innovative ways.

In this book, we teach theories of media by setting them out, using many examples, and showing how they operate in practice with case studies and tools chapters. In this way we can think of journalism as being, to use Thomas McLaughlin's term, a form of 'vernacular theory', in that it is a set of ideas that has evolved outside academia and, as you can see from the approaches listed above, has only recently been folded back into the academy, usually under the auspices of former practitioners.

In this way we hope to develop the links between media and journalism, and between theory and practice, and provide you with the most comprehensive introduction to media and journalism that we can.

We hope you enjoy the 3.0 edition of *Media and Journalism*. We hope you learn a lot and we hope you have some fun while doing it.



1

PART INTRODUCING MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

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What is media? How do we make sense of it? And why would we want to? In Part 1 we set out to answer these questions.

Chapter 1 (The Public Sphere) sets up the theoretical framework for this book: the connection between the mediasphere and the larger public sphere. This establishes the place of media in society and the way media forms are connected to one another. It also suggests one of the reasons why news is so important for media more generally and the changes currently occurring in the public sphere as a result of advances in media technologies.

Chapter 2 (The First Mass Medium) considers the evolution of media by focusing on the evolution of the first mass medium: print. Through an examination of individual newspaper journalists in history, it finds particular resonances with 21st-century figures and reminds us of the constant battle for a free and unfettered press.

Chapter 3 (The Fourth Estate) confirms the centrality of journalism to any consideration of media, because of the vital role it performs as the Fourth Estate. It also critiques the role WikiLeaks is playing in the new media landscape of the 21st century.

Chapter 4 (The Digital and Social Media Environment) considers the current environment in which media is evolving and how the rapid pace of technological change is shaping and reshaping the way we communicate.

Case Study 1 (The First World War, Journalism as the First Draft of History and the Making of the ANZAC Legend) looks at the role the media played in the creation of the Anzac legend through the first newspaper reports of the landing at Gallipoli, and critiques the continuing role of the media in the perpetuation of a national narrative around the First World War.

Part 1 Introducing Media and Journalism

Part cont...

Tools 1 (Print Media and Broadcast Interviews) introduces you to one of the most basic research skills, but one that requires a lot of practice to perfect. The interview is the point at which private information becomes public; where much information enters the public sphere. It is the foundation of news reports, features, broadcast journalism, ethnographic research and, frequently, dramatic narratives.



1

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

We spend most of our lives surrounded by **media**. Think about yourselves today. You may have watched the morning news. Then you might have put on the radio or flipped through a magazine or listened to some music on your iPod. Tonight you might go out to a film, or spend the night online. The odds are that by the time you sit down to read this chapter you will have already had a discussion about the football or the weather, how much you're looking forward to *The Big Bang Theory* or *Game of Thrones*, or how hot Kate Upton or Robert Pattinson look. Simon Frith describes these popular culture discussions as 'the currency of friendship ... trading pop judgments is a way to "flirt and fight"' (Frith 2004: 32).

#Media: Content and distribution mechanisms through which information and/or entertainment is transmitted.

The point is that this is how we all spend our lives: surrounded by media, immersed in media, interacting with media, each and every day. Media informs the way that we speak, the way that we think and the way that we navigate our way through the world.

In this chapter we look at:

- how media work
- the relationship between different types of media
- what the public sphere is
- how media contribute to the public sphere.

HOW DO MEDIA WORK?

Importantly, media do not work in isolation. Different media forms speak to each other as much as they speak to an audience. Television dramas refer to stories that have appeared on the news. Music clips parody films. Magazines detail the public and private lives of celebrities. Indeed, media forms refer to each other all the time. They make fun of each other and often require knowledge of each other to make sense.

The Simpsons

On the television series *The Simpsons*, Homer Simpson is working as a bodyguard for Springfield's corrupt Mayor Quimby. Facing down a group of gangsters in a crowded dinner theatre, Homer struggles to find something he can use as a weapon. Mark Hamill (appearing at the dinner theatre in *Guys and Dolls*) calls out to Homer from the stage: 'Use the forks Homer, use the forks!'

Television series such as *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* and *South Park* make lots of jokes that refer to other media. So do magazines such as *MAD* and films such as *The Naked Gun* and the *Austin Powers* series. You can still find these situations funny in themselves, but to be 'in' on the joke or to be able to recognise the pop culture reference, you need to consume lots of other media.

For example, to get this joke in *The Simpsons* you'd need to recognise Mark Hamill as the actor who played Luke Skywalker in the original *Star Wars* films—and recognise that one of the lines most associated with that film is 'Use the force'.

We call this knowledge **cultural currency**—the knowledge we acquire from consuming media. The more media we consume, the more cultural currency we acquire, allowing us to be in on the joke and more familiar with the way media work.

THE SHOT-REVERSE SHOT

Sometimes this knowledge is so deeply ingrained that we forget that we acquired it from other media forms. Think of the way film and television series cut between two actors when they are talking, showing an image of one speaker, then an image of another and back again.

This is called a **shot-reverse shot**. The only reason why we know these two people are talking to each other is our familiarity with the device from other film and television series. There's rarely anything in the shots themselves that suggests they're in the same vicinity, let alone talking to each other.

In this way we can think of media forms as parts of an ongoing conversation. They refer to earlier forms, earlier conventions and shared knowledges. They also add to the conversation and move the conversation forward, with new ideas and new technologies.

Sometimes this is explicit, as in the jokes in *The Simpsons*, the pop culture references in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or the sampling of an earlier piece of music in a dance track. Sometimes it is more subtle, like the acquired knowledge of conventions—the way a shot-reverse shot works, the ordering of stories in a news bulletin or the reading of *manga* from right to left and back to front



Cultural currency: The knowledge we acquire from consuming media.



#Shot-reverse shot: The standard method of showing two actors interacting in films and on television: first the image of one speaker, then the image of the other speaker.

In each of these examples, media forms are engaging each other in dialogue through jokes, references, reading conventions or cross-promotional opportunities. We can therefore characterise the relationship *between* different media forms as **dialogic**.

The relationship between media and their audiences is similarly dialogic. Media forms encourage their audiences to enter into dialogic relationships with them: to contribute, to question, to solve the mystery, to follow the narrative and to seek resolution.

Talkback radio is predicated on this dialogic relationship between a broadcaster and their community of listeners. So are television talk shows, such as *The Project* and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*, or letters to the editor in newspapers, comics and magazines.

Crime series such as *How to Get Away with Murder*, *CSI*, *Criminal Minds*, *Inspector Morse* and *Miss Marple* feature episodic mysteries that encourage viewers to solve the mystery along with the detectives. *Revenge*, *Lost* and *The X-Files* feature long-running mysteries ('story arcs' over several episodes or seasons) that similarly encourage viewers to seek resolution; to find the answer to what is going on. And some series, such as the short-run *Veronica Mars*, feature both of these types of mysteries. In *Veronica Mars*, episodic mysteries were based around events at Veronica's school, while the ongoing mystery arc of 'Who killed Veronica's friend Lilly Kane?' ran for the first season. By posing a question for the audience, these media forms invite the audiences into a dialogue to answer the question.

Soap operas (such as *The Bold and the Beautiful*), romantic films (such as *Pretty Woman*) and dramatic television series (such as *Grey's Anatomy* and *Sex and the City*, and the earlier *Moonlighting* and *Northern Exposure*) encourage audience engagement by putting impediments in the way of their lead characters coming together. Here the dialogic relationship begins with the question: 'Will X get together with Y?'

Even broadcast news is structured in this way. Newsreaders and reporters address audiences directly. Headlines engage audiences with the stories that will be covered, while sports and weather reports encourage us to stay to the end.

Advances in technology mean that the dialogic relationship between users of media and their audiences is becoming virtually instantaneous. Twitter enables its users to post text-based tweets of up to 140 characters on their profile pages, constantly updating their followers as to what they are doing at any point in time. Other social networking sites, such as Facebook, work in a similar way. Voting via mobile phones enables audiences to determine the outcome of talent quests such as *Australian Idol* or *X-Factor*—just as it used to determine who was evicted from the *Big Brother* house. Emails enable audiences to voice what issues are concerning them on morning news programs, actually shaping the content of these series. Some of these ideas are discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 18 and 19.

#Dialogic: Descriptive of texts that are structured as dialogue.

Breaking Bad

The AMC series *Breaking Bad*, created by Vince Gilligan, traces the evolution of dying chemistry teacher Walter White (Bryan Cranston) into the legendary blue crystal meth drug manufacturer, Heisenberg, so he can (at least initially) provide for his family. Across five seasons, the series traces the impact this has upon Walter's morality, his family and the larger drug and criminal culture of Albuquerque, New Mexico (where the action is set). As such, *Breaking Bad* involves its audience



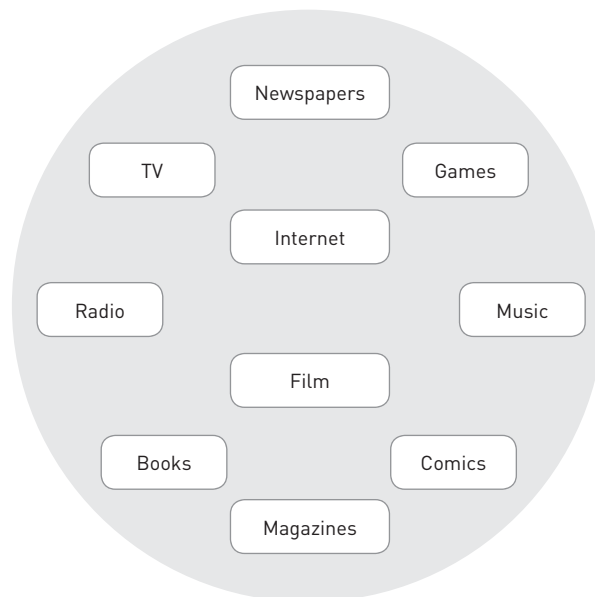
in both the larger serial narrative (Walter's journey) and several smaller discrete arcs (Walter's relationship with Jesse, the threat of Gus Fring, whether Walter's brother-in-law, DEA agent Hank Schrader, will discover the truth etc.) while engaging the audience in a broader dialogue around moral choices, moral consequences and the possibility of redemption. As creator Gilligan notes, his original conception was to reference classic characters; in this case, turning Mr. Chips into Scarface because: 'Television is historically good at keeping its characters in a self-imposed stasis so that shows can go on for years or even decades ... When I realized this, the logical next step was to think, how can I do a show in which the fundamental drive is towards change?' (in Klosterman 2011). As such, *Breaking Bad* functioned on a number of dialogic levels, not least of which was through references in other media texts as its popularity grew, including parodies, T-shirts with key phrases ('I am the one who knocks') and even a Mr Potato Head toy called Fries-Enberg.

THE MEDIASPHERE

If we think of the media as being structured like dialogue, we can move from thinking about discrete media forms (television series, web pages, films and newspapers) working in isolation, to chains or webs of media all talking back and forth to each other. This is the **mediasphere**: thousands of media forms connected to each other in subtle and obvious ways.

Of course, where there are connections between media, there is also the possibility of someone controlling those connections. As Thwaites, Davis and Mules (2002) note, engaging in dialogue is a fundamental part of social action, but it also means that media can be used to impose cultural *dominance* and offer forms of *resistance*. This means that the mediasphere is also connected to *power* and *control*.

FIGURE 1.1 The Mediasphere



Mediasphere: The subtle and obvious connections between media texts, whether fictional (popular media) or factual (journalism), that form a larger whole.

V

The science fiction television series *V*, which first aired in 1983–85 and was reimagined in 2009–10, deals with ideas of cultural dominance and resistance. In both versions, the series tells the story of Earth being visited by a vast fleet of flying saucers, piloted by apparently benign visitors who look just like us—but are actually cold-blooded reptilians scheming to exploit the Earth in some way (and process us for food). In both series they take control of the media and run a powerful public relations campaign arguing for trust and peace. Similarly, in both series a human resistance movement learns the truth and agitates for revolution against them. In 1983, for example, the movement is led by television journalist Mike Donovan (Marc Singer) and frequently fights for control of the media from the visitors, so they can show the worldwide audience what ‘they truly are’. Interestingly, the cultural dominance of the 1980s visitors is made clear through continual allegorical comparisons to the Nazis, through their SS-like black and red uniforms, their swastika-like symbol and their ‘visitor youth’ program. However, in the 2000s the visitors’ cultural dominance is made clear through constant allegorical comparisons to President Obama’s administration, including the reiteration of the buzzwords ‘hope’ and ‘change’ and the advocacy of ‘universal health care’. *V* therefore serves as an example of how ideas of cultural dominance can change over time (from the overt, to the subtle), but constantly depend on who ‘controls’ (or has access to) media.



UNDERSTANDING MEDIA AND POWER

There are two ways of understanding power relations in the mediasphere. The first is **hegemony** (Gramsci 1971), which is primarily involved in cultural dominance.

How is hegemony articulated?

French theorist Louis Althusser (1971) considered that cultural institutions (such as schools, religious groups and families) helped to construct hegemony by producing ‘cultural identities’ for people—convincing people that there were particular ways they should act or behave.

The media are clearly another cultural institution that functions in a similar way. Dominant groups use the media to persuade subordinate groups that they should remain in power. Here, the media encourages the subordinate groups to accept the leadership and ideas of the dominant power elite. We can refer to this influence as *hegemonic power*.

Importantly, hegemonic power is rarely a product of brute force. It is not like a soldier breaking into your home and convincing you, at gunpoint, that you must do this or that. Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, himself a founding member of Italy’s Communist Party and imprisoned by Mussolini for his political leanings, never thought that this concession of power or control by one group to another group was a part of hegemony. Hegemonic power is far more subtle than that. At its most subtle, hegemony is unseen and virtually unconscious.

Hegemony actually encourages subordinate groups to consent to the rule of the dominant power elite. This elite appears naturally superior and the subordinate group comes to believe that

#Hegemony: The ability of elite groups to acquire and/or remain in power by convincing subordinate groups that it is in their best interests to accept the dominance of this elite.

the dominant group shares the same ideas and beliefs as themselves. Ultimately, hegemony makes it appear that subordinate interests are best served by this elite group being in power.

Who are these dominant power elites?

Some groups within a culture—normally those with the greatest economic or cultural capital—have a greater opportunity to promote their ideas to wider audiences, and to convince those audiences to accept their claim to power. (Schirato & Yell 2000: 81)

Dominant power elites might include politicians (such as Kim Jong-un in North Korea), dictators (such as the late Muammar Gaddafi in Libya) or media barons (such as Rupert Murdoch in general) who can exercise control over the media through political pressure or ownership.

Dominant power elites require great economic or cultural capital because hegemony can rarely work through just one media form. Usually, hegemony requires an accumulation of media: a repetition of the same message over and over again, across different forms. Therefore, dominant power elites have to control vast amounts of media in order to exercise their hegemonic power.

THE MEDIASPHERE AS A POLITICAL ECONOMY

A lot of the terms we are using in this chapter—hegemony, pluralism and even the concept of the public sphere—were first applied to politics, and then imported into media studies. This is partly reflective of a larger shift in society, where dominant value systems (previously the sole province of religion or politics) have come to be embodied, reproduced and contested in the mediasphere. It is also indicative of the way media are increasingly implicated in politics and economics, which leads to a corresponding desire by governments to censor or at the very least regulate the media.

It is therefore possible to think of the mediasphere as a political economy and to study 'the social relations, particularly power relations, that mutually constitute the production, distribution and consumption of resources' (Wasko 2001: 29).

Understanding these power relations is clearly important for concepts such as hegemony and pluralism, as discussed below.

Think again of Rupert Murdoch, who is a recurring figure in this book. Murdoch owns a number of newspapers and television stations in the USA, the UK and Australia, among other countries. Following a directive from Murdoch, passed down through his editors and news producers, the editorials in all of his newspapers—and the presenters on his Fox News service—adopted a pro-war stance in relation to the US intervention in Iraq in 2003. Murdoch was therefore using his media to support President George W. Bush's policies in relation to the Middle East. Through the media, he was convincing subordinate groups that it was in their best interests that the US invaded Iraq.

PROPAGANDA?

We can link hegemony to ideas of **propaganda**. Hegemony is communication designed to persuade—as is propaganda. Hegemony aims to persuade us to think in a certain way, but whereas propaganda is usually overt, emotive and appeals to the nationalism of the audience, hegemony works on a far more covert level.

Propaganda: The
liberate, systematic
empt to shape
ceptions, manipulate
gnitions and direct
haviour to achieve a
sponse that furthers
desired intent of the
propagandist

Hegemonic power is exercised through the connections *between* media forms. Not only does hegemony convince the consumers of Murdoch's media that the dominant power elite is acting in their best interests, but it also goes a step further to convince them that the elite's interests are the same as theirs and that they actually deserve to rule.

So this dialogic relationship between media forms can work hegemonically to convince audiences that the dominant group is right, the dominant group is good, and the dominant group is actually looking out for them and helping them by being in power.

They Live



For a great example of hegemony, look at this 1988 film directed by John Carpenter. Here, John Nada (Roddy Piper; yes, the professional wrestler Rowdy Roddy Piper) discovers that the 'ruling classes' are in fact aliens, controlling the wider population and encouraging them to spend money, breed and maintain the status quo through the use of subliminal messages in the media. The OBEY signs in the film later inspired contemporary street artist and activist Shepard Fairey's OBEY sticker campaign, an ironic appropriation of the tools of hegemony by activism.

Diversity and choice

The alternative way of understanding power relations in the mediasphere is the **pluralist** view, which is fundamentally involved in cultural resistance. Pluralism argues that the mediasphere reflects the plurality of the larger society. We always have choice—the choice to ignore certain media, make fun of certain media or seek out alternative media:

#Pluralism: Diversity in society, and therefore in the media; pluralist media offer us a wide range of choices.

The main function of the media is to please the audience. It therefore seeks to fulfill their needs, and its representations meet with their expectations. Moreover, as media 'texts' are complex and contain multiple meanings, it is difficult to find clear patterns of representation or the distinct exercise of power. Indeed, media representations themselves are pluralistic. (Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 74)

So this dialogic relationship between media forms can also work pluralistically to offer us choices and ways of resisting cultural dominance. They also actively introduce us to different ways of seeing the world by exposing us to different social values and feelings.

Can these views be reconciled?

While these ideas of media and power are clearly in competition with each other—hegemony directs the public to think a certain way, while pluralism offers the public choice—it is possible to reconcile these ideas in the contemporary mediasphere. Consider the following propositions:

- Most news services (referring here to mainstream news services) work hegemonically, reinforcing ideas about how to understand the world in a certain way.
- The larger mediasphere—the dramas, soap operas, comedies, magazines, alternative presses, blogs, etc.—are pluralist, offering us a range of perspectives on the world.

Or, to put it another way:

- Rupert Murdoch owns the Fox television network.
- Fox News is generally regarded as being fiercely hegemonic, promoting a right-wing, conservative view of the world.
- The Fox network also screens *The Simpsons*, which is parodic, offering a number of ways of viewing the world, some of which support conservative views (for example, Homer's attitude towards gun control, the liberal media and homosexuals) and some of which openly criticise those views (including portraying Murdoch himself as a 'billionaire tyrant'). *The Simpsons* offers a pluralist view.
- Therefore, even though we could argue that the mainstream news industry is largely hegemonic (and we say 'largely' because there are always exceptions), the broader mediasphere is pluralist.

Community

For a great example of pluralism look at this US comedy series by Dan Harmon, which began in 2009. Each week sees a disparate group of individuals—including a cynical former lawyer, a pop-culture lover, an over-achiever, a religious single mother and a former football jock, among others—try to reach consensus in the halls of Greendale Community College. Of course, being a comedy, hilarious antics ensue, usually with loads of film and television references. But for our purposes, *Community* is as much about the operation of pluralism (celebrating the different points of view that make up this group) as anything else, particularly as the series celebrates how such a group can become friends by embracing what each makes them unique (and help them avoid the darkest timeline).

THE PUBLIC SPHERE

As Gramsci saw it, groups are always struggling for control—for hegemonic power. Power is therefore never secured but always being negotiated, contested and exchanged. So even if we adopt a purely hegemonic approach to media, we have to concede that groups are constantly fighting for the consent of the people. Occasionally, we can even see that fight made manifest in ratings wars, the lobbying of governments, regulations, censorship and struggles over ownership and broadcasting rights.

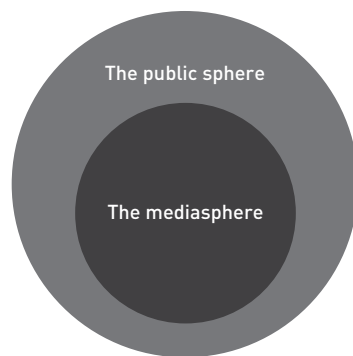
Therefore, regardless of whether the mediasphere is purely pluralist, purely hegemonic, or is ultimately a combination of both, it should be clear that the mediasphere is a space where ideas can be negotiated, exchanged, discussed and contested (as part of that dialogic relationship between media forms and between audiences and media forms). This means that the mediasphere is also part of the larger **public sphere**: 'The idea of the public sphere is of something which is open and accessible to all and a key component of modern, participatory, democratic life' (O'Sullivan et al. 1994: 250–1).

Public sphere: The public spaces of work, leisure, politics, religion, academia and the mass media, where issues and ideas are countered, articulated, negotiated and discussed as part of the ongoing process of reaching consensus or compromise in democratic societies.

Although ‘public sphere’ and ‘mediasphere’ are terms that are used fairly interchangeably, especially in the press, it is important to note that the public sphere is larger than the mediasphere. It certainly incorporates the mediasphere—and the mediasphere is centrally important to the functioning of the public sphere—but it also includes areas well outside the province of the mediasphere.

The public sphere includes conversations at the pub, posting on Facebook, blogging, a debate over dinner, a text message, a noticeboard at the office, a suggestion box at a restaurant or sticky notes on a refrigerator in a share house (‘Don’t touch my muffin!’).

FIGURE 1.2 The Public Sphere



Interestingly, some theorists, such as John Hartley, still prefer to think of the public sphere as being enclosed by the mediasphere—an inverse relationship to the one we have set out above. It really all comes down to how you define ‘public’. Is a busker in the street part of the public sphere? Is a presentation in a lecture theatre or an activist on a soapbox? All of these may be unmediated but they certainly all contribute to the public sphere, suggesting to us that the public sphere is the larger of the two.

The public sphere is often defined in opposition to the private sphere (the personal and domestic spaces of the home), but increasingly the media conflate the public and the private. Talk shows (such as *Oprah* and *The Jerry Springer Show*) and reality television (such as *Big Brother*) did this throughout the 1990s into the 2000s, and today’s social networking sites and apps (such as Facebook and Twitter or Tinder and Grindr) are similarly predicated on this idea of making the private public (or at least publicly accessible). This means that the public sphere is anywhere ‘where information, ideas and debate can circulate in society, and where *political opinion* can be formed’ (Dahlgren 1995: ix). Note the emphasis on ‘political opinion’. Again, there is a clear overlap between media and politics, which we return to below.

We can also characterise the public sphere as dialogic, but it is a conversation between ideas and minds rather than between media forms. The mediasphere plays an important role in this meeting of minds and ideas, but, once again, the conversation can clearly extend well beyond the mediasphere.

Increasingly, as communities become larger and larger, the mediasphere plays a greater role in the functioning of the public sphere. Politicians use media to reach potential voters through television appearances and Twitter. Families and friends use media to keep in touch via texting and social networking sites. Audiences learn about the communities of which they are a part through media: print, television and online news informing them about their local community, their state community, their national community and the international community. Indeed, media theorist Alan McKee (2005) suggests that the mediasphere actually functions as the public sphere for modern nations.

THE WATER-COOLER EFFECT

A popular way of describing a successful television series in the 1990s was to call the series a **water-cooler show**. The term refers to the way people in offices would gather at the water cooler to discuss the previous night's programs. Such a conversation was indicative of the level of investment by a series' viewers (that they were willing to discuss the series in such detail the following day) and would generate interest in the series among people who had not seen it (encouraging them to tune in or otherwise be excluded from the conversation). *Seinfeld*, *Ally McBeal* and *Sex and the City* have all been examples of water-cooler series. *Underbelly*, *Lost* and *Breaking Bad* similarly became water-cooler series for a while, while *Game of Thrones* is a current example.

This water-cooler effect is an example of how the public sphere extends beyond the mediasphere. Ideas generated in the mediasphere are taken up outside the mediasphere (at the water cooler) and discussed, negotiated and contested.

An even earlier example of the water-cooler effect might be the hairdressing salon where the previous night's television or the contents of a magazine could become the topic of discussion and debate.

The mediasphere has therefore become the place where ideas are articulated and circulated because populations are now too large to gather together in one physical space.

Of course, maintaining this exchange of ideas and information in society is important because it is only through such exchanges—such *participation*—that democracy can function.

IS THERE ANYTHING LARGER THAN THE PUBLIC SPHERE?

Yuri Lotman, using the model of the biosphere, suggested that all communication may be part of something called the 'semiosphere', which he defined as the 'semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages' (Lotman 1990: 123). (We discuss semiotics in more detail in Part 3.) As all communication would include communication in both public and private spaces, the semiosphere would be much broader than the public sphere. We can therefore think of communication as mapping across three spheres that are arranged like Russian dolls: the semiosphere, which encloses the public sphere, which, in turn, encloses the mediasphere.



#Water-cooler show:
A film, television or radio program that generates great interest wherever members of the public gather in discussion, especially around the office water cooler.



The public sphere as a physical space

Originally the public sphere was a physical space. From the sixth century BCE, the **forum** was a large, unenclosed area in Roman cities designed for public gatherings. Greece had a similar area called an **agora**.

Hartley (1992a) describes how the forum gave voice to the free man, allowing him to participate in public life 'directly, as a voter, a jurist, a consumer, or as an audience of oratory in the service of public affairs' (Hartley 1992a: 35):

The classic Roman forum [Greek agora] was the place of citizenship, an open space where public affairs and legal disputes were conducted ... In classical Greece or Rome, assuming you were a free man rather than a woman, slave or foreigner, you could walk into the agora or forum and participate in public life directly. (Hartley 1992a: 33, 35)

In the beginning, each city had only one forum, which performed the dual functions of business (legal, political and mercantile) and entertainment (public games, theatrical performances and gladiatorial combats). In time, separate forums developed, such as the *forum civile* for legal and administrative affairs, and the *mercantile fora venalias* (the marketplace).

#Forum: In ancient Rome, a public square or marketplace where business was conducted and the law courts were situated.

#Agora: An open space in a town where people gather, especially a marketplace in ancient Greece.

Gladiator

For an example of the physical public sphere, see Ridley Scott's film *Gladiator* (2000). Here the gladiator Maximus (Russell Crowe) uses the arena as part of the public sphere to introduce new ideas and issues that challenge the authority of Roman Emperor Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix).



The forum is the ancient history equivalent of the town hall where people similarly gather together to discuss and negotiate ideas and issues of common concern. The forum is also the archetype of many of the institutions around us today, including parliament, the courts and even shopping centres. All of these structures developed around the notion of *spectacle*. They conflated the public and the private in the way they brought private matters—such as local interests, and the prosecution of crime and consumption—into the public sphere. And of course this emphasis on spectacle also means that the forum is the archetype of the modern-day stage, as well as mass media forms such as film, television and social networking sites. For more on this, see Foucault (1972).

The public sphere as a conceptual tool

Jurgen Habermas was the theorist responsible for introducing the public sphere as a concept in his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). Here the public sphere became a way of theorising about the relationship between media (and communication practices more generally), politics and society.

However, Habermas continues to link the public sphere to a physical space—the coffee house and salon culture of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries where educated people gathered together to exchange and debate ideas. (In some ways we are seeing a re-emergence of this culture in commercial coffee chains, though the quality of debate would often be less than Habermas would like.)

Habermas saw this (idealised) physical space as providing an opportunity for people to openly and equally discuss their views—particularly in relation to politics. Habermas also linked the public sphere to the new developments in printing at the time, particularly the mediation of issues in newspapers, pamphlets and political journals. So, once again, media are heavily implicated in politics and, most importantly for Habermas, the maintenance of democracy.

In the relationship between the public sphere and democracy, Habermas links the public sphere to a much larger concept—modernity—which is defined in greater detail in Chapter 20. Modernity embodies all of these ideas of democracy, including equality and freedom, and recognises the importance of the individual in contributing to the functioning of society.

In conceptualising the public sphere, Habermas is really moving the public sphere away from a physical space and towards an ideal. This means the public sphere is becoming a **virtual space** and, more particularly, a tool to measure the health of public discussion and democracy in society. The public sphere therefore becomes a way of assessing the mediasphere's role in enabling public dialogue and political participation, and, ultimately, sustaining democracy.

Importantly, for Habermas the public sphere is not just a public space and a virtual space—it is also a *political* space. The aim of this Habermasian public sphere is to promote political debate and thus enable democracy. As such, Habermas thought the public sphere should only involve 'rational debate' and engage with 'serious issues', thereby excluding entertainment, emotion and 'soft' news. As such, the Habermasian public sphere is presented as an ideal for how society *should* operate.

Virtual space: An alternative space to the generally accepted reality, experienced by people interacting with other people and their environment via media forms like computers and the internet through face-to-face contact; also known as 'cyberspace'.



#Rational media: Media that promote political and social debate, including broadsheet newspapers, political pamphlets, hard news reports, political websites and public broadcasters.

RATIONAL MEDIA AND ELMO

Media that could potentially fit Habermas's definition of **rational media** are those promoting political debate, including broadsheet newspapers, political pamphlets, hard news reports, political websites and public television broadcasters—with some concessions. For example, PBS's *Sesame Street* would fail in that it aims to entertain as much as educate and focuses on emotional as much as logical responses, hence the presence of the Muppet characters. This seems a shame. Why should Elmo be excluded from the public sphere?

Ultimately, Habermas wanted to encourage people to work harder to achieve this level of rational discussion. He didn't want the public sphere to be something easily accessible; rather, participation in the sphere should be an achievement, a reward for improving yourself. This may seem elitist, but it still carries a certain resonance for lots of people in Western democracies. In some ways it also echoes a lot of the arguments academics make about the value of education.

The public sphere as a virtual space

For Habermas, the public sphere operates as a virtual space because it is an ideal, a concept that can be applied to our present society as easily as 18th-century coffee culture or the ancient Roman forum. In Habermas's recognition of the importance of media in articulating ideas and mediating issues, the public sphere also becomes a virtual space: 'Today, newspapers and periodicals, radio and television are the media of the public sphere' (Habermas 1997: 105).

WHY IS THE HABERMASIAN PUBLIC SPHERE AN IDEAL?

We can describe Habermas's concept of the public sphere as idealised for a number of reasons.

First, his view of salon culture and media in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries never actually existed as he described it (see Dahlgren 2002 for more about this). While Habermas believed this public space was universally accessible, in reality it excluded people based on class, ethnicity, geography and gender; only wealthy, white, educated men actually participated in these debates. Habermas has since acknowledged this fault (Habermas 1992).

Furthermore, the media in existence at the time were far more diverse and commercial than Habermas describes.

Finally, Habermas has been criticised for speaking of a singular, unitary public sphere rather than multiple public spheres—a criticism taken up and developed by postmodern theorists (see below). Essentially, it means that Habermas's ideal still excludes a variety of people based on geography, sexuality, race and gender (not just Muppets).

As the mediasphere is a virtual space, composed of the dialogic relationship between media, the increasing centrality of the mediasphere in the public sphere moves the public sphere further and further away from a physical space towards a purely virtual one.

This is confirmed by the continuing technological developments in media, most notably the internet. Blogging, independent online news sites and personal web pages all confirm the democratising potential of the media (see Chapter 4 for more on these developments). In the US Democratic Party's pre-selection process in 2007, candidates were asked questions directly by voters operating through YouTube.

Increasingly, then, these public spaces are virtual spaces, allowing for the instantaneous dissemination and debate of ideas, and capable of gathering together vast communities of people irrespective of geographical location.

The Social Network

For an example of the virtual public sphere see David Fincher's *The Social Network* (2010). The film uses the story of the founding of the social networking site Facebook (and subsequent lawsuits) as a metaphor for exploring how media have become our primary mechanisms of communication—leaving us virtually unable to communicate without them.



The public sphere as postmodern space

Partly as a response to Habermas—and partly because of the changing nature of the mediasphere—another way of thinking about the public sphere has emerged: the public sphere as a **postmodern** space.

With advances in technology, population growth and the move towards globalisation, the mediasphere and the public sphere have become almost indistinguishable. More importantly, the contemporary mediasphere is quite clearly not the ideal political space Habermas envisaged.

Of course, this is not to say that the mediasphere does not feature political discussion. As previously noted, politicians, be they members of government or minor parties, or political activists, have long recognised the importance of airing their views through the media. But vast segments of the mediasphere are also governed by commercial imperatives and devoted to entertainment (rather than information). Additionally, an increasing number of media forms (quite apart from news) have brought private issues into the public sphere, including social networking sites (such as Facebook), talk shows (such as *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*), reality shows (such as *Big Brother*), do-it-yourself shows (such as *The Block*) and talkback or drive-time radio (such as *Hamish and Andy*). In this way the mediasphere has legitimated private issues as being worthy of public discussion.

POPULAR MEDIA

Postmodern theorists tend to be more interested in the value of **popular media** (Hartley 1996: 5–7), such as tabloid newspapers, soft news, commercial television, commercial radio, computer games and comic books.

Postmodern scholars argue for recognition of these changes in the public sphere. They claim that popular media actually give voice to the minority groups excluded in both the physical and Habermasian spaces of the public sphere. Essentially, then, postmodern theorists are also arguing for the public sphere as a way of democratising social life. They just think democracy can be achieved in different ways.

For this reason, postmodern theorists view *all* genres of media as being capable of contributing to this exchange of ideas, not just the 'rational discussion' and limited range of factual media Habermas describes. They argue for popular media to be taken seriously—politically, culturally and socially.

Fundamentally, then, postmodern theorists view the plurality of the mediasphere as actually assisting democracy. The more diverse media are, the more capable they are of giving voice to all segments of the population—different ages, different genders, different religions, etc. They offer not only information and ideas, but also different perspectives. McKee (2003) maps this approach by reclaiming critiques of the mediasphere to describe how feminine ('trivial'), working class ('commercial'), black ('spectacular'), gay ('fragmented') and youth ('apathetic') issues and ideas are all articulated and debated by popular media.

Postmodern: A way of thinking that encourages the consideration of multiple points of view. Postmodern thinking considers that there is no single true representation of any aspect of the world: rather, there are multiple ways of making sense of the world and therefore multiple competing 'truths'.

Popular media: Media consumed by the majority of the population; for example, tabloid newspapers, soft news, commercial television and radio, computer games and comic books.

A QUESTION OF ACCESS?

One of the major differences between these ideas of the public sphere is in relation to access. The pre-modern public sphere excluded women, slaves and foreigners from participating. Furthermore, because it was a physical space, there were physical limitations on how many people could participate. Habermas's ideal public sphere does not have physical limits, but sets other limits to access, excluding anything that does not constitute rational debate, for example. The postmodern public sphere appears completely accessible as it encourages—and celebrates—difference. But with the mediasphere becoming a more important part of the public sphere, even access to the postmodern public sphere can be limited by technology, censorship and ownership.

This is often referred to as the **digital divide**: the gap between those who can access media technology (thanks to wealth, culture and geographical location) and those who cannot. It is the gap between the information rich and the information poor, because without technological access to the mediasphere, these people are effectively being excluded from participating in the larger public sphere.

#Digital divide: The gap between those who can access media technology (thanks to wealth, culture and geographical location) and those who cannot.

Why is all of this important for people engaging with media and journalism?

Understanding this relationship between different media forms—and between the mediasphere and the public sphere—is important for three reasons.

First, it reminds us of the centrality of media in contemporary culture. Media provide us with a common knowledge. They show us what is going on in the larger societal groupings to which we belong and, increasingly, they are one of the few ways we can engage with others on a local, national and international scale. They are the primary mechanisms through which issues and ideas are expressed and debated. They are, therefore, vitally important to sustaining our society, our very way of life, because they provide us with the resources for active citizenship.

BROADCASTING

This centrality of media in modern societies may still seem surprising to some of you, but, as Jostein Gripsrud (1997) notes, it is a notion embodied in the term 'broadcasting' itself. Originally, broadcasting was an agricultural term referring to the practice of sowing seeds by hand in the widest possible circles. Taking this as a metaphor, we can understand broadcasting to mean that 'there are centralized central resources (the bucket of seeds), which, given the widest possible distribution, may yield a rich harvest' (Gripsrud 1999: 37). Broadcasting is really the communication of knowledge (ideas and information) in 'the widest possible circles'. We return to this idea in Chapter 10.

#Broadcast: The transmission of knowledge (ideas and information) in the widest possible circles. It can operate as a verb: to broadcast; a noun: a television broadcast; and as an adjective: a broadcast program.

Second, understanding this relationship between different media forms assists us to understand the interplay of ideas between news and the rest of the mediasphere. Indeed, understanding how journalism and media fit together in this dialogic exchange of ideas is one of the rationales for this book.

WHY IS NEWS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT TO THE PUBLIC SPHERE?

As we defined it in the introduction, news is literally new information. Therefore, it is the entry point for the public sphere; the place where new ideas, new information and new issues most often move from the private to the public. From hard news (exposés, investigative journalism, court reporting and political reporting) through to soft news (celebrity news, fashion news, and leisure and lifestyle news) a similar pattern applies: when something becomes news it is moving from the private to the public; it is becoming part of the public sphere.

Of course, news often works with the public relations and celebrity industries to achieve this; they similarly make the private public or generate more public awareness around a certain organisation or individual.

More particularly, journalism also has the potential to act as a watchdog for the public sphere (see Chapter 3).

Third, understanding this relationship provides us with a framework for understanding how issues and ideas are articulated through the mediasphere.

In studying television, John Ellis (1999) refers to the concept of 'working through', which is a psychoanalytic term Ellis defines as 'a process whereby material is not so much processed into a finished product as continually worried over until it is exhausted' (Ellis 1999: 55). In relating this to television, Ellis suggests that television 'can be seen as a vast mechanism for processing the raw data of news reality into more narrativized, explained forms' (Ellis 1999: 55).

Television works through the material from the news ... It uses words, providing forms of explanation and understanding, further information and the kinds of psychological perspectives that are impossible within the news format ... providing increasing stability to the images of disorder: it reframes and refocuses; it narrativizes and adds production values. (Ellis 1999: 56)

In the context of television, Ellis pursues this articulation of issues and ideas from news through to chat shows (offering psychological frameworks of understanding), to soap operas, documentaries and current affairs (offering narrative frameworks of understanding) and on into drama series, sitcoms and television films.

We can similarly apply this idea of working through to the larger mediasphere. Newspapers, news periodicals, radio, online and television news **set the agenda**, 'breaking' the story. The issues and ideas coming out of the story are then taken up by other media genres, personalised in current affairs series, documentaries and periodicals, and narrativised in television series, films, music and comics. Some narrative forms explicate this: the television franchise *Law & Order* often advertises its stories as being 'ripped from the headlines'. Other narrative media forms, such as hip-hop music, provide a voice to a group underrepresented or negatively represented by the media, often speaking back against mainstream media (and therefore offering a site of resistance). Blogs, text messaging and social networking sites then permit audiences to post, discuss and share their ideas on these stories. The mediasphere, therefore, provides a range of alternative perspectives, adding to the conversation and generating new ideas and new issues, all as part of this process of moving towards consensus or compromise.

Agenda setting: The way the media determine what will be communicated as well as to influence what audiences think about and discuss.

In this way we can understand the mediasphere as a more accessible interface between the purely political rational debate demanded by Habermas and the more pluralistic and personal perspectives of the postmodern theorists. It becomes, in effect, a 'forum for interpretations' (Ellis 1999, p. 69) and contributes to the larger public sphere in this way.

The mediasphere provides us with a way of working through ideas and issues. It does not and cannot offer definitive conclusions, but rather is part of this larger process of working towards consensus or compromise.

FIFTY SHADES OF GREY

Try to apply the Ellis model of 'working through' to the mediasphere in connection to *Fifty Shades of Grey*, the book and film franchise detailing the relationship between college graduate Anastasia Steele and the emotionally crippled and controlling young businessman, Christian Grey. You could analyse the media's treatment of a core element of the franchise—BDSM (bondage, dominance, submission and masochism)—and explore how that was worked through as both emancipatory and abusive for women, both accepted and derided by the mainstream and alternative groups. Alternatively, you could analyse the way the franchise develops across the mediasphere, from fan fiction, to ebook, to print, to filmic adaptation. Either way, *Fifty Shades* offers a great example of how the mediasphere operates. Just don't try it at home (unless you're an emotionally crippled and controlling young businessman too!).

THE END OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE?

One of the major concerns with technological developments in media (that we will revisit in Chapter 4) has been the erosion of privacy. As discussed earlier, the growth of the mediasphere and portable/wearable media has made the concept of a private sphere virtually obsolete (pun intended). There are very few places you can be now without having some sort of access to media. Similarly, there is nothing stopping anyone from filming and streaming content live from what once would have been considered to be private. But digital media, and the participatory nature of the culture that engenders, has also had an effect on the concept of the public.

Public sphericules

We previously talked about postmodern theorists' recognition of many equally valid ways of understanding the world—based on gender, race, religion or age, for example. One of the side effects of this is that a postmodern public sphere often celebrates fragmentation. As opposed to Habermas's idea of a homogenous, unified whole, the postmodern public sphere can in fact be a set of multiple, smaller, **public sphericules** based around particular cultures and subcultures. Sometimes these sphericules overlap, sometimes they incorporate smaller sphericules, sometimes they just rub against each other and sometimes they barely touch at all. So we could refer to a

#Public sphericules: Multiple smaller public spheres—based on particular cultures and subcultures relating to age, sexuality, gender or race—that interconnect with each other.

queer public sphericule, an Islamic public sphericule, a youth public sphericule and so on, with information and entertainment occasionally passing between them or even entering into larger more 'mainstream' public sphericules.

One example of a public sphericule most of you would be familiar with is a Facebook page. We can call this a public sphericule because it is based around issues of fundamental importance to relatively few individuals—for example, shared social experiences, talking about the latest episode of *Girls*, posting links, exploring memes allied to the tastes of the group, that sort of thing. What's more, this public sphericule will be connected to other public sphericules (other Facebook pages). A Twitter account functions in a similar way providing information, opinions, jokes, links and retweets to a few thousand like-minded individuals.

Filter bubbles

But as internet activist Eli Pariser (2011) suggests, this combination of technology and fragmentation of the public sphere carries with it some very serious issues for individuals, civic discourse and society as a whole, partly because of web personalisation. Repeated use of search engines like Google or Yahoo!, or Facebook's personalised news feed, means that the website's algorithms start to selectively guess what information the user would like to see based on their search history, click behaviour, location, etc. As a result, users are increasingly directed to information that matches with their immediate interests, feeding them only what is familiar and comfortable and therefore increasingly removing them from any ideas that conflict with their own.

Pariser refers to this as a 'filter bubble—that personal ecosystem of information that's been catered by these algorithms' (quoted in Parramore 2010) where the user effectively becomes isolated in their own social/cultural/ideological bubble. As Pariser (2012) sees it:

Here's the challenge: as more and more people discover news and content through Facebook-like personalized feeds, the stuff that really matters falls out of the picture. In the Darwinian environment of the hyper-relevant news feed, content about issues like homelessness or climate change can't compete with goofy viral videos, celebrity news, and kittens. The public sphere falls out of view. And that matters, because while we can lose sight of our common problems, they don't lose sight of us.

While the existence of a filter bubble is not without its critics, most criticisms revolve around the extent to which personalised filtering is happening and whether such filters actively contribute towards fragmentation or commonality. Certainly the capacity for such personalisation exists, even if it is not acted upon. But more importantly for us, the filter bubble works as a concept that highlights the problems that can and do exist where multiple public sphericules take the place of one, unified public sphere. These include the loss of a common culture, a lack of consensus and a lack of exposure to differing viewpoints or ideas. Such a shift also undercuts ideas of the postmodern public sphere as 'minority' viewpoints are increasingly distanced from each other. CNN Analyst Doug Gross perhaps put it best when he said that such structures suit consumers (who are trying to filter out options that don't suit their needs) but are inappropriate for citizens (who should be seeking out different viewpoints and ideas as part of political decision making) (Gross 2011).

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- All media forms are structured like dialogue. They talk back and forth to each other and to their audiences.
- This creates a mediasphere of media forms that are in constant conversation with each other.
- Dominant groups are always seeking to control media in order to hegemonically convince audiences to accept their view of the world—but the plurality of media also offers the possibility of resistance.
- This constant articulation, debate and negotiation of issues and ideas makes the mediasphere an increasingly important part of the larger public sphere.
- Understanding this relationship enables us to appreciate the role each media form has in this interplay of ideas and the way ideas are continually articulated through the mediasphere.
- However, technological advances in digital media mean that the public sphere is splintering into multiple public sphericules based around different cultures and subcultures.
- The risk of such a shift is that we will lose our common culture and be less informed citizens.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why has the mediasphere become such an important part of the public sphere?
- 2 Do you agree with Habermas's assertion that only rational media should contribute to the public sphere? Why or why not?
- 3 Explore how a number of social issues are 'worked through' the mediasphere using John Ellis's model.
- 4 Are you concerned about the erosion of the private sphere? What do you still consider to be private and try to keep private about yourselves?
- 5 Outline the multiple public sphericules you are a part of. What do you think you might be missing out on from the broader public sphere?

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2

THE FIRST MASS MEDIUM

INTRODUCTION

News was first shared around campfires as hunters roasted mammoth flesh and exchanged stories of their latest hunting triumphs and failures. These first oral news stories were surpassed daily when new hunting feats became the next point of discussion. Some of these hunting tales were given permanence through illustrations on the walls of caves, which could be regarded as the world's first news images. We could think of both of these spaces, the campfire and the cave, as being the earliest forms of the public sphere; news was therefore a part of the public sphere from the very beginning. Indeed, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the public sphere could not function without it.

Centuries later, the exchange of news stories took place in the agora of ancient Greece and in the forums of Rome. Later still, in medieval Europe, wandering minstrels roamed from town to town ringing their bells and broadcasting written proclamations. By the 16th century, coffee houses were the arenas for the communication of news and for debate on public affairs. Then a German goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg, invented a printing press that revolutionised printing, and the process of communication was changed forever.

In this chapter we look at:

- the history of the first ‘mass medium’
- the impact of Gutenberg’s printing press on the creation of news
- the advancement of journalism through the ages
- the challenges the newspaper industry faces in the 21st century in the internet age.

Note that the term ‘news’—and the associated terms ‘hard news’ and ‘soft news’—are defined at length in the introduction to this book.

THE FIRST PRINTED NEWS

Julius Caesar introduced one of the first forms of written news with the *Acta Diurna* (‘Daily Events’) in about 59 BCE. This laboriously handwritten news-sheet told stories of government scandals, military campaigns, trials, executions, battles and conflagrations. The *Acta Diurna* was produced at great expense and sent to the governors of provinces and to private subscribers, while in Rome it was posted in the Forum for all who could read, creating a focus for political and social discourse.

GUTENBERG’S PRINTING PRESS

From the eighth century in China, newspapers appeared as handwritten news-sheets in Beijing, informing merchants and powerful citizens of events. However, the news-sheet in this form did not enter Europe until the middle of the 15th century, when German goldsmith, Johannes Gutenberg (c. 1398–1468), invented a printing press with replaceable and moveable letters. Gutenberg’s invention revolutionised printing in Europe.

Although a movable type had been known in East Asia since the 11th century, it is unlikely that this system was established outside of Asia before Gutenberg. A printing trade existed in Europe before Gutenberg’s time, but the woodblock technology was a complex and laborious process. Individual sheets of paper were placed on an inked woodblock and a single impression was taken by rubbing the sheet—a very time-consuming method. Gutenberg’s invention was a considerable leap in speed and efficiency, and transformed the printing industry. He had been inspired by the technology used in the screw-type wine presses of the Rhine Valley. His screw press, which he designed to achieve an even transfer of the image to paper or parchment, worked by first rolling ink over the raised surfaces of moveable handset block letters held within a wooden form, and then pressing the form against a sheet of paper. The hand-casting instrument—the most significant element of the invention—allowed the printer to quickly cast the required number of a diverse range of characters. The metal used for casting was an alloy of lead, tin and further admixtures, which allowed for rapid cooling and sufficient durability under the high mechanical stresses of the press. Gutenberg’s printing method remained the standard until the 20th century.

While Gutenberg's press created a revolution in the production of books and pamphlets in the 15th century, it did not directly lead to the birth of the newspaper as we know it. Most news-sheets were still handwritten in small numbers by official scribes, providing the wealthy merchants and the elite with information about shipping, trade, commerce and politics. Occasionally, when there were important events such as political unrest, war, natural disasters or royal visits, town criers (the first news readers) read out these news-sheets in public places. Gutenberg's press, however, not only fostered rapid development in the sciences, arts and religion, but also created an environment in which the newly literate populace started to demand information about the noteworthy events happening in their community. However, the high cost of printing, combined with the fact that the majority of people in Europe were still illiterate (with the exception of monks and merchants), delayed the development of cheap, mass-produced newspapers.

PREDECESSORS OF THE NEWSPAPER

Broadside: A precursor of the newspaper; cheap single pages of entertaining news, usually crime or sensationalised accounts of disasters. In the 1860s, cheap newspapers had largely taken their place.

In Germany in the late 1400s, news pamphlets or **broadside**s were printed for the entertainment of the wealthy, educated elite, and contained the first content we would recognise as news today. Each pamphlet or broadside published a highly sensationalised story about a natural disaster, a shocking crime, a scandal or a remarkable adventure. Some of the most famous of these pamphlets report the atrocities against Germans in Transylvania perpetrated by a sadistic *vevod*, named Vlad Tepes Dracul, who became the Count Dracula of later folklore. Names for early forms of printed news included pamphlet, broadside, broadsheet, newsletter, newsbook, *coranto* and *gazette*.



Dracula and the evolution of media

Dracula remains a central figure in the development of media. Every generation has reinterpreted the tale of Bram Stoker's vampire, from numerous theatrical productions through to the silent film *Nosferatu* (1922) and the youthful *Dracula* of the 2007 BBC television production. There have been American Draculas (Bela Lugosi and Jack Palance), English Draculas (Christopher Lee and Gary Oldman) and even blaxploitation Draculas (the infamous *Blacula* from the seventies). The Count has appeared in virtually every media form, from comic books through to Count Chocula's cereal, and shows no signs of diminishing in appeal; he remains the single most represented fictional character in media. A history of Dracula is a history of media, so it seems appropriate that Tsepes's tale, which served as one of the inspirations for Dracula's creator Bram Stoker, should be part of the first mass medium.

Corantos

In the English-speaking world, the earliest predecessors of the newspaper were **corantos**, or small news pamphlets, which were only produced when a newsworthy event occurred. The first English printing press was established in 1477, and London soon became one of the most important centres for printers in Europe. News pamphlets, unlike the newspapers to come, were printed irregularly in London and provided reports of single events. One of these news pamphlets, *The Trew Encountre*, published in England in September 1513 by Richard Fawkes, told the story of the Battle of Flodden Field. By the reign of James I, printers were publishing stories of war, calamity, political intrigue and religious strife in profitable weekly *corantos*.

#Coranto: The earliest predecessor of the newspaper, a *coranto* was a small news pamphlet that was only produced when a newsworthy event occurred. From the Spanish *coranto* ('runner'); that is, fast-delivered news.

NEWS AS A COMMODITY

It was in Venice that the commercial value of news as information was first recognised. In the Venetian Republic in the mid 16th century, merchants set a precedent by charging an admission fee of one *gazetta* (a small coin) to public readings of the latest news-sheets. Venice was a centre of trade and information, and merchants needed to know the location of vessels and the value of the expensive cargoes they carried. Duplicates of these dispatches were also sold to merchants. In 1556 the Venetian Government ordered the collection of information and the weekly dispatch of news in a **gazette**. The term 'gazette' has since been a popular name for commercial newspapers.

#Gazette: One of the earliest forms of a newspaper, which published official government information. Named after a *gazetta*, a small coin in the Republic of Venice that was the price of their early news-sheets, the name was later applied to many types of newspaper.

In the first half of the 17th century, regular newspapers began to emerge to supplement the occasional news-sheets and pamphlets. By the early 1600s, the first true news **periodicals** emerged when printers realised that their news pamphlets could be profitable if they were published regularly.

#Periodical: a magazine or journal published at regular intervals, such as weekly, monthly or quarterly.

THE FIRST NEWSPAPER

German Johann Carolus is credited with publishing the first newspaper, the *Relation*, in 1605. The *Relation* was officially titled, *Relation aller Fürnemmen und gedenckwürdigen Historien*, which translates as 'the collection of all distinguished and memorable news'. There is argument among scholars, however, as to what constitutes the first newspaper, with some (see Morison 1980) arguing that *Relation* was a 'newsbook' rather than a newspaper because its layout resembled a book: it was printed in quarto size with the text spread across the page in a single column width. Morison argues that the world's first newspaper was the *Dutch Courante uyt Italien, Duytslandt, &c*, which was first published in 1618. Other scholars (see Chappell 1999; Smith 1979) do not make a distinction between the newsbook, the pamphlet or the newspaper.

The *Relation* was soon followed by other newspapers, including the *Nieuwe Tijdingen* in Belgium in 1616, the *Weekly Newes* in England in 1622 and the *Gazette* in France in 1631. By the 1620s, printers in Amsterdam were exporting weekly newspapers, published in French and English, to England and other European countries.

SPREAD OF VERNACULAR LANGUAGES

The advent of Gutenberg's printing system, and the creation of an environment that promoted the spread of knowledge and eventually led to an increase in working-class literacy, meant that printing was no longer restricted to the very wealthy. The reduced prices of printed materials made them more accessible to the masses, leading to a freer exchange of knowledge and ideas. Gutenberg's system popularised vernacular languages like English, French, Italian and German, and saw them replace Latin texts, and saw a larger audience gain access to Luther's German translation of the Bible, accelerating the spread of the Protestant Reformation. It seems appropriate to think of journalism as a 'vernacular theory' of media (see the Introduction) because its evolution popularised vernacular languages.

EARLY ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

The first English printer, William Caxton, set up a printing press in England in the early 1470s. In 1474, his translation and printing of *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye* was the first book printed in English. Caxton printed nearly a hundred publications, about twenty of which he also translated from French and Dutch. The most famous books from his press include *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde* by English poet Geoffrey Chaucer. While Caxton did not publish news, he did bring the technology to England that would eventually lead others to establish news publications.

Many scholars regard the *London Gazette*, first published in 1665, as the first English newspaper, because it contained mainly news, and it was produced regularly. The *London Gazette*, which was the only officially sanctioned newspaper (government gazette) of the time, consisted mainly of news items from Europe, and occasionally from America or Asia, but it rarely covered domestic issues. At this time the press was subject to strict censorship, as the English government had quickly recognised the power of newspapers to inform the populace, create public discourse and set public agendas. They saw this spread of information as a threat to their power, and sought to limit printing presses to the London district. Laws were passed to license printers and restrict the publication of material critical of governments and royalty. The publisher of the *London Gazette* omitted any domestic news to avoid landing himself in prison, instead reporting on the military blunders and royal scandals of other nations. The first regular daily newspaper, the *Daily Courant*, was not published until 1702.

ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

The outbreak of civil war between the English King and Parliament in 1642 transformed the dissemination of news, creating an unprecedented demand for domestic news in England: people wanted to be informed of the current state of national affairs. At the same time, those involved

in the political struggle realised the power of the press to promote their own political cause, and the press became a powerful propaganda tool. In the breakdown of authority, censorship controls lapsed and partisan newsbooks such as the *Daily Intelligencer* widely reported domestic news for the first time. These political publications, vociferous in support of a particular political perspective, were filled with sensational narratives of heroic battles and atrocities committed by the enemy. They had a ready audience in their loyal supporters and circulations rose dramatically, leading to larger and more frequent print runs. One Royalist report in 1645 read in part: ‘The Cathedral at Lincolne hath lately been prophaned by Cromwell’s barbarous crew ... who have filled ... that holy place with their own and horses dung’ (Patterson n.d.).

At the end of the English Civil War, Oliver Cromwell tried to curtail the unchecked dissemination of political news. On the eve of the execution of Charles I, Cromwell attempted to suppress all news-sheets, but he was unsuccessful and the newspaper headlines announced in dramatic prose the beheading of the king. However, when the monarchy was eventually restored, press control was reintroduced and government censorship saw a dramatic reduction in the amount of political news being reported. This did not, however, see a decline in newspapers, as the public taste for printed news had been whetted and newspapers were firmly established as a profitable enterprise.

By the 1670s, murders and executions were popular news topics. In late 1677, for example, one English **broadsheet** published a series of murder stories under the title: ‘A True Relation of All the Bloody Murders that Have Been Committed in and about the Citie and Suburbs of London, Since the 4th of this Instant June 1677’. Witches were also big news. In 1767, an eight-page news pamphlet was titled ‘A Brief Narrative of A Strange and Wonderful Old Woman that Hath a Pair of Horns Growing Upon Her Head’. These sensational broadsides often began ‘A True Narrative Of ...’ ascribing the notion of truthfulness to sensational narratives.

#Broadsheet: Historically a cheap single page of entertaining news, usually crime or sensationalised accounts of disasters and a precursor to the newspaper. By the 1860s, cheap newspapers had largely taken their place. Today broadsheet refers to a large format newspaper (in Australia, generally 841mm × 594mm). In some countries, including Australia, broadsheet newspapers are commonly perceived to contain more ‘quality’ or in-depth journalistic reporting than their tabloid counterparts.

THE BIRTH OF THE JOURNALIST

Newspapers now employed reporters as news gatherers to find news and report on events that would attract readers’ attention and boost circulation. The word **journalist** came into use as early as 1693 to describe those who wrote of the daily goings-on for the public press. Daniel Defoe, considered the world’s first journalist, first published the *Review* in 1704.

The early broadsheet journalists in England were called ‘running patterers’, with ‘patter’ meaning the fast, well-prepared talk of someone such as a comedian or salesperson. These running patterers would run from the courthouse or gallows to the newspaper offices to write up their lurid gallows literature, which often contained true confessions from the poor hapless criminal about to swing—all conveniently rhyming and written in ballad style. Mayhew described one of these running patterers as a ‘seedy, half-starved looking middle-aged man’ who came in to the office ‘with a bundle of manuscripts in his hand. He had on a shocking bad hat, and a red nose, and smelt of liquor abominably’ (Mayhew 1861: 226).

#Journalist: A person who practises journalism; someone who gathers and disseminates new information about current events, trends, issues and people to a wide audience; from the French *journal*, which comes from the Latin *diurnal* (‘daily’).

The early broadsheet reporters were also known as hacks (a term that is still used today as a derogatory descriptor for some tabloid journalists) because they often culled their information from reputable daily newspapers, such as the *Times*, and from these reports they created lively stories to entertain their working-class audiences.

Freelance reporters writing for both broadsheets and the respectable press were also known as penny-a-liners, because they received a penny a line for their reports, which gave them the incentive to create florid, verbose stories. These freelancers made up the casual labour force of journalism until the middle of the 19th century.

US President Theodore Roosevelt appropriated the term **muckraker** in 1906 to refer to investigative journalists who challenged his government. While the press of the early 20th century seized the name as a badge of honour, today it is used more as a derogatory term for tabloid journalists who write sensationalised stories.

John Wilkes

The courageous actions of one Englishman, the radical journalist, newspaper proprietor, parliamentarian and notorious libertine John Wilkes (1725–98), forever cemented the notion of a free press. It's of interest to us today that another Wilkes-like character, the 21st-century maverick journalist Julian Assange, has come along to show us that crusading journalism can still enliven the Fourth Estate. Assange, in publishing secret diplomatic cables and government documents, is following in the fine tradition of Wilkes.

In 1771 Wilkes, with the support of several London printers, challenged the law that prohibited the reporting of parliamentary debates and speeches. Until this time, parliamentary proceedings were kept secret because those in power argued that such information was too sensitive to be communicated to its citizens. It was argued that disorder, disturbance and even uprising could result from the publication of parliamentary debates and speeches. Through his actions in challenging the right to publish information, Wilkes (like Assange) brought upon himself the wrath of the powerful elite and (also like Assange) found himself hounded into prison on charges intended to destroy him.

Wilkes established the *North Briton* newspaper in 1762 while a Member of Parliament, and used his newspaper to criticise the King George III, as well as the Prime Minister, the Earl of Bute, who was supported by the King and who Wilkes considered to be incompetent. On 3 April 1763, after he published an article critical of the government and the monarch, Wilkes was charged with seditious libel and imprisoned in the Tower of London. However, with the support of influential friends and the defence that as a Member of Parliament he was immune from prosecution, he was found not guilty and left the court as a champion of liberty.

Wilkes continued to be a thorn in the side of the government and the Crown, publishing articles attacking the king and the government. At one point, a government supporter challenged Wilkes to a duel in a plot to silence the radical newspaper proprietor. There were rumours that the challenger had been practising his shooting skills for months before the challenge. Wilkes was shot in the stomach, but his life was saved by the attentions of a doctor secured by his friends. Soon after the duel, parliament passed a bill to remove a member's privilege from arrest for writing and publishing seditious libels. Still seriously ill from the shooting, Wilkes was spirited away to France by friends before he could be arrested.

Muckraker: A term coined by President Theodore Roosevelt, referring to investigative journalists who challenged his government. The term came from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1657–8), where it was used to describe men who look for trouble wherever they go.

During his absence he was expelled from parliament. When he eventually returned to England in 1768, he stood as Radical candidate for Middlesex, but immediately after being elected he was arrested and sent to King's Bench Prison. Such was the outrage of his London supporters that large crowds assembled outside the prison to protest his incarceration. By 10 May 1768, the crowd had swelled to more than 15,000. As they chanted slogans demanding Wilkes's liberty, troops opened fire and seven of the protestors were killed. The outcry at what became known as the St George's Field's Massacre saw Wilkes's popularity spread throughout the city and in 1769 he was elected as an alderman of the City of London.

Not long after his election, he was found guilty of libel, expelled from the House of Commons and sentenced to almost two years in jail. Undaunted, Wilkes stood three more times for the seat of Middlesex and was elected on each occasion, only to have the result overturned by parliament. When he was finally released from jail in April 1770, he was still banned from the House of Commons, but continued to be influential in local government affairs and active in the campaign for press freedom.

He now used journalism to challenge the government, reporting parliamentary debates verbatim in his newspaper, the *North Briton*, arguing that parliamentarians were not representatives of the people if the people were ignorant of what went on in parliament. The government was outraged, claiming his actions, and those of several other printers, were a breach of parliamentary privilege. When a messenger was sent by parliament to arrest two of the printers, Wilkes, as a city alderman, had the messenger arrested for violating the privileges of the City of London.

A large crowd surrounded the House of Commons, chanting slogans in support of Wilkes and the printers, and the government, aware of the backlash from the St George's Field's Massacre, ordered the release of the two men and abandoned attempts to prevent the publication of reports of its debates. While parliament maintained that the publication of debates was a breach of parliamentary privilege, it made no attempt to enforce its order. Wilkes had won the day and from that moment the freedom of the press was born.

In 1774, Wilkes was elected Lord Mayor of London and he was also elected to represent Middlesex in the House of Commons. He died on 29 December 1797.

SHORTHAND

Court and parliamentary reporters were the first newspaper journalists, as we understand the term today. **Shorthand** is a system of rapid handwriting made possible by using abbreviations of words. Scribes in ancient Greece, Egypt, Sumeria and Rome used shorthand systems to record the important proclamations of rulers and religious leaders. Many different systems of shorthand developed during the Renaissance. In 1588, Dr Timothie Bright's *An Arte of Shorte, Swifte, and Secrete Writing by Character* was published in London, and John Willis published the first known alphabet of shorthand in London in 1602. Samuel Pepys used the Shelton system to record his account of the Great Fire of London in 1666—perhaps the first journalistic use of shorthand. In 1707, Thomas Gurney developed a system of shorthand that was later taken up by Charles Dickens during his career as a parliamentary and court reporter.

#Shorthand: A system of rapid handwriting made possible by using abbreviations of words.

The introduction of shorthand meant reporters had a dramatic impact on court and parliamentary reportage. The journalist who had the ability to write shorthand became 'the principal broker for the substantial discourse of society' (Smith 1979: 163). The format of parliamentary reports and court reports was transformed from brief summaries to lengthy verbatim testimonials. Shorthand's impact on the manufacture of news was akin to the introduction of live broadcasts almost two centuries later, providing the individual reader with a sense of personal engagement with the court or parliamentary process, while at the same time maintaining their place within the mass audience experience. The fact that these reports were rarely verbatim, or full transcripts, and were in fact still highly mediated texts, was a moot point. The perception was that this expanded version of parliamentary and court proceedings, in conjunction with the perception of neutrality it brought to the journalist's role, conferred a greater authority to these news texts.

THE *TIMES* AND THE RISE OF THE ENGLISH PRESS

In 1785, the *Times* (the 'newspaper of record') was first published in London by John Walter I under the title the *Daily Universal Register*. Walter, who in 1788 changed the name to the *Times*, published commercial news and government notices with a smattering of crime and scandal. By the 1830s, the *Times* had developed into a widely respected national journal and daily historical record. In 1852, John Delane told his readers in a stirring leading article that newspapers had a specific and unique responsibility for the shaping of ideas and the forming of public policies. Late in the 19th century, the *Times's* reputation and circulation declined. However, under the ownership of Alfred Harmsworth, Viscount Northcliffe, who purchased the newspaper in 1908, the *Times* was restored to a position of influence and financial security. (See below for more about Northcliffe.)

THE IMPOSITION OF A STAMP DUTY

Between 1801 and 1851, the population of England and Wales grew from nine million to 18 million, due mainly to a decline in infant mortality. At the same time, the number of literate citizens began to increase significantly. Aware of the political power of the newly literate masses, and of the dangers of allowing the working class to create a public discourse through newspapers, in 1819 the government imposed a stamp duty on newspapers. *The Newspaper Stamp Duties Act* created a tax on 'small publications which issue from the press in great numbers at a low price'. This tax kept the price of newspapers out of the reach of most of the literate working class, who resorted to reading their news in libraries at a cost of a penny an hour. The tax remained in place for almost 40 years, until it was finally abolished in 1855 allowing cheap newspapers to flourish.

RISE OF THE PENNY PRESS

By the 1850s, working-class literacy was between 65 per cent and 75 per cent, providing a ready audience for the popular press. There were three significant technical developments in the printing industry in the early 1800s that, when combined with the abolition of the stamp duty in 1855 and

the rise in working-class literacy, advanced the rise of the newspaper industry. These developments were the introduction of:

- continuous rolls of paper
- the steam-powered press
- iron to replace the wooden press.

Tabloid in size, the **penny press** presented news on crime, calamity, scandal and sport for the literate working class. The growth of railway networks also had a dramatic impact on the distribution of newspapers across the world. In London, newspapers could now reach regional areas on the day of printing, leading to the development of London-based national tabloids. By 1855, two London newspapers, *Lloyd's Weekly News* and *News of the World*, each had achieved circulation figures of more than 100,000 copies a week. Their success, according to Francis Williams, rested on a formula 'as old as that of the first broadsheets and as up to date as that of next Sunday's *People* or *Sunday Pictorial*: crime (especially when violent), sex (suitably shrouded) and sport' (Williams 1957: 103).

#Penny press: Cheap 19th-century newspapers that cost a penny and were marketed to the newly literate working class, leading to a dramatic increase in newspaper circulation.

The telegraph and the advent of the inverted pyramid

It was the technology of the telegraph that produced the wire services and the distinctive 'who, what, where, when, why and how' format of printed news. This style of news writing, known as the **inverted pyramid**, placed important facts at the top of the story to ensure that as much information as possible was transmitted in case a wire broke and the connection was lost, thus ensuring that the most important information was communicated. The inverted pyramid style of writing remained the dominant news writing style for more than 100 years. However, in recent times, with the advent of the internet, new media and the proliferation of soft news, the inverted pyramid has been challenged as the dominant news writing style (see Chapter 15).

#Inverted pyramid: The style of writing news that places the most important information at the beginning of the story, followed by less important information, and so on to the end of the story; this enables the story to be cut from the bottom in order to fit the space available.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ADVANCES IN THE NEWSPAPER INDUSTRY

- American Richard Hoe's invention of the rotary printing press in 1843 made printing much faster than it was with the old flat-bed printing press.
- The invention of the telegraph in 1844 transformed the content of newspapers, because information could be transferred within a matter of minutes, allowing for more timely, relevant reporting. The telegraph also saw the birth of the inverted pyramid news format.
- The growth of railway networks led to the development of national tabloids based in capital cities.
- The invention of the system of offering newspapers to newsagents on sale or return in the middle of the 19th century led to an enormous uptake of newspapers by local shops and newsagents.



THE TABLOID

Alfred Harmsworth, Lord Northcliffe, is credited with inventing the tabloid newspaper in the early 1900s. Scandal, crime and sport were already popular topics in newspapers in the first half of the 19th century, and long before Northcliffe entered the scene *Lloyd's Weekly News* had exploited the

tabloid: In a literal sense, a type of newspaper that is smaller and easier to read than a broadsheet (roughly 432 mm by 299 mm and generally half the size of a broadsheet). Generally, it refers to newspapers that focus on sensational, and is recognised by an informal vernacular delivery, featuring such subjects as crime, sex, scandal and sport. Today, hard news stories, even in 'serious' news organisations, are often delivered in a tabloid style.

crime formula so successfully that it became the first newspaper in the world to reach sales of a million. Fox Bourne (1887: 370–1) lamented the fact that many newspapers gave people what they wanted: sport and 'loathsome court cases'.

Northcliffe made reading newspapers appealing to a mass readership by redesigning the layout of the newspapers, introducing illustrations, and presenting the news in an attention-grabbing narrative style. When Northcliffe purchased the *Evening News* in 1894, the paper was nearly bankrupt. However, by dramatically changing its content and appearance, the paper's circulation rose to almost 400,000 within a short time, and by 1896 its circulation approached 800,000. Northcliffe reduced advertisements to a single column on the left, leaving six columns of news broken up by attention-grabbing headlines and illustrations. He also made the content of these news reports more accessible to the working class by introducing a vernacular style. Headlines such as: 'Was it Suicide or Apoplexy?', 'Another Battersea Scandal', 'Bones in Bishopgate', 'Hypnotism and Lunacy' and 'Killed by a Grindstone' were guaranteed to attract readers.

Buoyed by this success, Northcliffe launched a new paper, the *Daily Mail*, on 4 May 1896. This eight-page newspaper, with its innovative banner headlines that went right across the page, ran with the slogan: 'The Busy Man's Daily Newspaper', and aimed to provide a simpler, shorter style of news stories based on scandal, sex, crime, human interest and sport. It was also the first newspaper to include a women's section. The *Daily Mail* was an immediate success and circulation quickly reached 500,000. The national interest in the Boer War in 1899 saw sales go over one million. Northcliffe also founded the *Daily Mirror* in 1903 and in 1908 he purchased the *Times*, transforming it into a modern newspaper.

Northcliffe's greatest influence was in shifting the press away from its traditional informative role to that of the commercial exploiter and entertainer of the masses, a tradition taken up by media magnate and head of News Corp, Rupert Murdoch, in the late 20th century. While Northcliffe is still considered by some to be the most successful publisher in the history of the British press, Murdoch is challenging this mantle.

THE FIRST MEDIA BARONS

Media baron: A replacement for the term 'press baron'; refers to the early English newspaper proprietors, such as Lord Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Northcliffe, and contemporary media owners such as Rupert Murdoch.

Between 1890 and 1920, the period known as the 'golden age' of newspapers in England, the press was dominated by the **media barons**—Viscounts Northcliffe and Rothermere, and Barons Ridell, Beaverbrook and Dalziel—who exerted enormous influence. These powerful newspaper lords shaped the attitude of governments and influenced major decisions in the First and Second World Wars. Along with their counterparts across the Atlantic (William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer), they built huge publishing empires and were notorious for the ways in which they wielded their power. Lord Beaverbrook, the owner of the highly successful English newspapers the *Evening Standard* and the *Daily Express*, was also a member of the English Parliament. As the first Minister for Information during the First World War, he created a propaganda model for publishing news stories that showed the government in a favourable light.

EARLY AUSTRALIAN NEWSPAPERS

In the early years of settlement in the Australian penal colony, the first printed news was official government gazettes, which provided information on convict musters and the arrival of ships, as well as announcements on rules and regulations for the military, convict and free populations. Australia's earliest newspaper, the *Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, was first printed by a former convict, George Howe, in 1803. This weekly newspaper was 'moral to the point of priggishness, patriotic to the point of servility, pompous in a stiff, 18th century fashion' (Ferguson, Foster & Green 1936: 98). Howe encouraged colonists to submit articles for his newspaper, and to accommodate them he hung a 'slip box' in front of the store where the paper was issued. Poems, literature and religious advice were published alongside official reports, shipping news, auction results, crime reports and agricultural notices.

The second newspaper to be published in New South Wales was the *Australian*, established by the explorer William Wentworth in 1824. (This should not be confused with Australia's current national newspaper, the *Australian*, which was launched in 1964.) By the 1830s there were seven newspapers in the colony. Australia's longest-running newspaper, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, was first published as the *Sydney Herald* in 1831.

The first commercial newspaper in **Van Diemen's Land** (Tasmania) was the *Derwent Star and Van Diemen's Land Intelligencer*, first published in 1810. By the mid 1850s, Australia's smallest colony boasted a vibrant newspaper industry with eleven titles, including two newspapers still in publication today: the *Hobart Mercury* (1854) and the *Launceston Examiner* (1842). Rev. John West, the first editor of the *Examiner*, wrote a stirring leading article in the first edition on 12 March 1842 in which he spoke about the important role of the press in Australia, sentiments that, despite their antique phraseology, are just as relevant today:

The legitimate province of the press has long been settled and defined, and notwithstanding its occasional perversion, its immense public utility is fully perceived and admitted. Stronger than charters and laws for protection of the people, it has raised a tribunal, before which the best of rulers bow, and the worst of depots tremble. With telegraphic rapidity it announces the approach of political danger, and preserves the social edifice from injuries, which could not be averted by arms.

Keen to discover and prompt to tell obnoxious truth, its collective voice cannot be restrained by terror, or stifled by corruption.

Representatives may be intimidated or bribed, and the forms of freedom may survive its principles, but so long as the press exists the spirit of liberty can never perish: its summons will arouse the people to defend their rights when they are invaded—to recover them when they are lost.

The press has other important functions to perform.

All the complicated concerns of man, his wide-spreading relationships, his intellectual achievements, his commercial enterprise, his duties, his wants, his sorrows—all these combine to form the field from whence the diligent journalist may gather instruction, and give importance, variety, and interest to his labours. But a newspaper may be a curse; it

#Van Diemen's Land:

The former name of Tasmania; it was known by Europeans as Van Diemen's Land until 1853 when the name was changed to Tasmania (after Dutch explorer Abel Jansoon Tasman). The name change came in the same year that transportation of convicts ceased.

may disturb and disfigure the operations of that mighty agency to which it belongs, and tarnish the triumphs of the press. A newspaper may be the organ of vice and the instrument of prejudice, a mere channel to ignorant vituperation, a dagger pointed, ready for every assassin of private reputation, who is malignant enough to employ it, and has cash enough to pay for it.

Yet it is not enough that a newspaper should be innocuous—it ought to be useful. A false delicacy that does not disturb the quiet of speculators or impostors, or shrinks from correcting the errors of well meaning but blundering functionaries, may secure a journalist from opposition, but he must speedily drive into contempt and drop into oblivion. (West 1842)

Today the *Examiner* is Australia's second-oldest newspaper after the *Sydney Morning Herald*, having been published continuously since 1842.

The first Victorian newspaper, the *Melbourne Advertiser*, was published in 1838, with the *Port Philip Herald* following in 1840 and the *Argus* in 1846. The *Argus*, a conservative newspaper for most of its history, was a Melbourne institution until its closure in 1957. The newspaper adopted a left-leaning approach when it was acquired by the London-based *Daily Mirror* newspaper group in 1949. Its main competitor was the *Age*, which was launched in 1854 at the height of the Gold Rush. In its first decade the *Age* established itself as a newspaper with a radical viewpoint, publishing strident editorials in support of the miners at Ballarat, and later supporting the eight-hour working day and reforms to land laws. Competition between the *Argus* and the *Age* was fierce, and legend has it that the reporters at the *Argus* once handed telegraph operators a copy of the Bible to transmit in an attempt to take over the wires and prevent other newspapers from sending their stories. The gold-mining boom led to the birth of several newspapers in Victoria, including the *Herald*, which in 1853 was first produced on steam press, and the *Melbourne Australasian*, which was first published in 1854.

Early Western Australian newspapers included the *Fremantle Journal and General Advertiser* (1830), *West Australian Gazette* (1830), *Fremantle Observer* (1831), *Perth Gazette* (1831), *Western Australian Journal* (1831) and *Western Australian Colonial News* (1833). The *Perth Gazette* (1833) was the forerunner of today's *West Australian*, which is one of Australia's oldest continually published newspapers.

The *Brisbane Courier Mail* is descended from one of Queensland's earliest newspapers, the *Moreton Bay Courier*, which was first published in 1846. Other early Queensland newspapers include the *Moreton Bay Free Press* (1850), the *Queensland Guardian* (1860), the *Ipswich Observer* (1870) and the *Daily Observer* (1880).

In South Australia, there were five weekly newspapers in the 1830s and rivalry was fierce. Competitors frequently published attacks on other newspapers, as illustrated by the following editorial, published in the *South Australian Register* attacking the *Southern Australian* in 1838:

Though we think it scarcely necessary to pollute our columns with examples of the trash doled out by the persons who club their wits to rake together a weekly sixpence worth of scum, still, as a friend, blessed with a stomach not easily turned, has ventured to gather a few specimens out of the nauseous and disgusting puddle, we print these lies with a running commentary. (Pitt 1946: 31)

In 1848, the first issue of *Deutsche Post für die Australische Colonien*, a bilingual English–German newspaper, was published in South Australia. The proprietor later moved the newspaper to the

Barossa Valley, where a large number of German migrants had settled. In 1862, the first edition of the *Telegraph* newspaper was published in Adelaide to mark the connection of the telegraph from Melbourne to Adelaide. This newspaper is said to be Australia's first penny evening daily. The *Telegraph* soon had competition from the *Adelaide Express*, another penny evening newspaper that was published by *South Australian Advertiser* (1858) and was launched in 1862. South Australia is the birthplace of the most powerful media mogul in the world today, Rupert Murdoch, whose father's company News Limited owned the *Adelaide News*.

The Koori Mail

Australia did not have a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander newspaper until the *Koori Mail* was launched in 1991. Regarded as 'The Voice of Indigenous Australia', the newspaper is owned jointly by five small Aboriginal organisations in Bundjalung country, on the far north coast of New South Wales. Significantly, profit from the newspaper goes back to Indigenous Australians in the form of dividends, sponsorships and scholarships. The *Koori Mail* is published fortnightly, and has an Australia-wide circulation of 90,000.

EARLY NEWSPAPERS IN THE PACIFIC AND ASIA

The first newspaper to be published in New Zealand was the *New Zealand Gazette*, which was launched by journalist Samuel Revans in April 1840. The *Wanganui Chronicle* was first published as a daily newspaper in 1856 and the *Otago Daily Times*, New Zealand's longest-running daily newspaper, was first published in 1861. By 1866, thirteen newspapers were being published across the country.

One of the longest-running newspapers in Asia is Singapore's *Straits Times*, which was first published in 1845. Japan's first daily newspaper, the *Yokohama Mainichi Shimbun*, began publication in 1870, although printing from movable type had been introduced into Japan in the late 16th century. Japan's longest-running newspaper is the *Mainichi Shimbun*, which was first published in 1872.

THE WORLD'S FIRST WEATHER CHART

The world's first weather chart to be published in a newspaper—a map of the east coast of mainland Australia—was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 5 February 1877.



THE NEWS IMAGE

Photographic technological advances in the 1880s led to the first photographs appearing (in the form of lithographic illustrations) in newspapers and periodicals. But it was the development of the half-tone process, which allowed the publication of photographic images directly rather than through engravings, that transformed the format of newspapers and eventually led to the pictorial layouts that we are familiar with today.

THE DIGITAL CAMERA

The greatest advancement in press photography was the arrival of the digital camera at the end of the 20th century. While this new technology, to date, has not changed the look or format of newspapers, it has created new ethical dilemmas about photographic manipulation. Additionally, combined with computer programs such as PhotoShop, it has allowed citizens with few photographic skills, who witness a news event, the opportunity to contribute to newsmaking. For more on the impact of digitalisation generally, see Chapters 4 and 19.

A RIVAL—THE ADVENT OF THE BROADCAST MEDIA

When broadcast radio entered the media scene in the 1920s, newspapers were forced to re-evaluate their role as society's primary information provider. Like the advent of the internet and new media technologies of today, the development of the radio—a low-cost alternative news source—sparked fears that it would overtake the newspaper industry. To respond to this new competition, editors revamped the format and content of newspapers to broaden their appeal. Stories were expanded to provide more in-depth coverage, with longer feature stories and pictorial supplements introduced.

No sooner had newspapers adapted to radio than they were forced to re-evaluate themselves once more following the introduction of television following the Second World War. In America between 1940 and 1990, newspaper circulation dropped from one newspaper per every two adults to one per every three adults. Despite this sharp decline, television's omnipresence did not render the newspaper obsolete.

Technological advances in printing technology in the late 20th century enabled newspapers to introduce colour printing and high-resolution images, which saw a proliferation of lifestyle supplements and a reduction in the hard news content. **Infotainment** news—in the form of lifestyle, travel, finance, education, showbiz and book sections—dramatically changed the style and content of newspapers.

COMPUTERS

Perhaps the biggest revolution in the printing industry since the steam-powered press in the 19th century was the advent of computer technology in the 1970s. The introduction of the first daisy-wheel printer signalled the end of the mechanical printing press that had developed out of Gutenberg's screw press 500 years earlier. The daisy-wheel printer was soon superseded by the dot-matrix impact printer, which was faster and could print graphics and different fonts. By the end of the 1980s, the ink-jet printer had overtaken the dot-matrix printer, followed by the laser and then the thermal-transfer printer. The immediate impact of these changes was in the loss of employment for printers, linotype operators and compositors. The electronic computer-based typesetting system gave direct access to typesetting by journalists and the telesales staff who typed out classified advertisements, thus bypassing the linotype operators in the composing room and reducing the workforce by 75 per cent. Most linotype operators and compositors were forced to take redundancy or retire, while some were retrained.

Infotainment: Originally a term that referred just to television programming that dealt with serious issues or current affairs in an entertaining way; today the term applies across all media, and refers to the style in which soft news is presented, in both form and content, is delivered in lifestyle and current affairs series.

THE 'GOLDEN AGE' OF AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISM

Many journalists who were working in journalism in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s regard this time as the 'golden age' of Australian journalism. Journalists were abundant in the newsroom and the profits from advertising meant that reporters were given more freedom and time to investigate and produce stories than perhaps at any other time. The so-called 'golden age' was also an era where journalists were twice as likely to contract lung cancer from second-hand smoke and editors were 'quite cranky and unforgiving' (Polites 2012). Despite the health hazards and cranky editors, many journalists from this period would 'love to repeat the past, go back to what they think was some golden age of newspapers and journalism, when editor-gods roamed the news rooms dispensing the KNOWLEDGE. But a return to the past is most unlikely' (Gawenda 2008). So what was happening in the mid 20th century to provide this sense of the 'best of times'?

In the post-war period, newspapers needed to find new ways to remain profitable in the face of increasing costs of publishing and increased competition. The *Argus* newspaper in Melbourne, for example, was the first newspaper in the world to publish colour photographs in a daily paper, but despite this innovation the *Argus* struggled in the new era of increased competition in the Melbourne newspaper market and with the popularity of talk-back radio and television. In 1957, after 111 years, the newspaper was forced to close, which was a boon to the paper's rival, the *Age*. The *Age*, owned by the Syme family from 1856 until Fairfax bought controlling interest in 1972, was first published in 1854. In the 1940s the paper's circulation was lower than it had been at the turn of the century. It was outdated and struggled to keep pace with the popular *Sun News-Pictorial* and the *Herald*. But in the 1950s Oswald Syme set about modernising the paper's appearance, changing the news coverage and introducing photographs (which rival papers had done long before). But the greatest transformation in post-war period came in the next generational change when Oswald Syme's grandson Ranald Macdonald took over as chairman of the company in 1964.

In 1966, Macdonald appointed the first professional editor from outside the Syme family, Graham Perkin. Perkin was a man of great ideas and ambitions, and set about modernising the *Age*, transforming the broadsheet from a politically, visually and editorially conservative newspaper to a more left-leaning and innovative newspaper that valued in-depth investigative reporting. According to former investigative journalist under Perkin, Ben Hills, Perkin was the finest Australian editor of his century and changed forever the way Australians thought of quality newspapers (Hills 2010). Eric Beecher, the publisher of online magazine *Crikey*, began his career under Perkin, and he says Perkin was an example of how an 'ambitious and decent newspaper can enrich its community and how a great editor can be the inspiration for powerful journalism that makes a difference to society' (Beecher 2010).

But the business model for newspapers in the 1960s and 1970s 'golden age', was not quality journalism, but rather classified advertising, something Rupert Murdoch once labelled the 'rivers of gold'. Quality, public interest journalism has never been a money maker. It is expensive to produce and, as Eric Beecher writes, because it has always appealed to a relatively small audience, and thus attracted little advertising revenue of its own, media owners in the past were cross-subsidising this higher form of journalism and being rewarded with the power and prestige, on the back of classifieds that generated profit-to-revenue margins of close to 90 per cent (Beecher 2013).

In the 1960s and 1970s, the *Melbourne Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* were two of the most profitable newspapers in the country. The newspapers were run on a dual business model: the classified business and the journalism. The classified business was highly profitable because of the monopoly both newspapers had on classified advertising in their respective capital cities, and the quality journalism was paid for out of the profits from advertising. For both of these newspapers, the price of classified advertising was at the discretion of the newspapers rather than dictated by a competitive marketplace. Both papers set the price and the public demand was such that the classified advertising content was many times greater than the editorial content. According to former editor of the *Age*, Michael Gawenda:

The classified sections of papers like *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran to hundreds of pages. Go back three decades and have a look at Saturday editions of these papers. They were huge while the editorial space, the space for journalism, was miniscule. These papers sold close to 100,000 extra copies on Saturday and I can tell you it wasn't because of the journalism! (Gawenda 2008)

Gawenda acknowledges that the classified business was 'a gold mine', but he argues that journalism as a business was never very profitable, even in this so-called golden age:

How did [journalism] stack up in terms of profitability? Well the fact is that the weekday papers that carried few classified sections were never particularly profitable. They certainly were nowhere near profitable enough to sustain a staff of hundreds of journalists and continue to deliver the sort of results that had made newspaper companies with classified monopolies amongst the most profitable in the world. (Gawenda 2008)

With the advent of the internet in the 1990s, the newspaper industry faced its biggest threat. While change is hard to predict and the need to adapt age-old traditions is sometimes hard to accept in the maelstrom of change, the news media itself—the industry in the business of communicating news and change—was too slow to understand, accept and act upon the changes the internet was bringing to the delivery of news and information. The internet poached most of Australia's newspaper classified advertising, and the money that once financed quality journalism disappeared while the media proprietors watched on in denial. Fairfax Media, the publishers of the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, was particularly vulnerable when the internet arrived. In 2003, the newspapers were generating 56 per cent of their revenue from classified advertising, compared with 18 per cent of the *New York Times* and the *London Daily Telegraph* (Beecher 2013).

Eric Beecher was quicker than most managers in the industry to see the tsunami of change. In 2005 he purchased *Crikey*, an online magazine and subscription email newsletter from its founder Stephen Mayne. 'People no longer line the streets outside newspaper presses at night to be the first to see the ads', Beecher wrote in 2013. The golden age of newspaper journalism in Australia had ended and many are now waiting for the new golden age of journalism in the digital world to begin.

CHANGING FORMATS: THE 21ST CENTURY

But all is not doom and gloom, at the same time as the internet is threatening traditional news formats news organisations have taken steps to monetise the web in their own right. Associated Press has launched a partnership with more than twenty-four news companies to license news

content and collect royalties from aggregators. News companies are now creating their own digital advertising sales networks to cut out third parties, and have started moving into digital marketing and consulting. And a few American news organisations, such as the *Financial Times* and the *Boston Globe*, have opted out of the ‘app’ worlds controlled by Apple and Google by creating mobile pages using HTML 5 (Rosentiel & Mitchell 2012: 3–4). Newspapers now offer digital innovations such as weekly politics **podcasts**, links to their online news editions, and news updates on mobile phones.

While the shift away from print-centric traditions has been slow to occur, it is happening and traditional print newspapers are starting to reorganise their production of news around a digital-first rather than a print-first schedule. The physical dimensions of print newspapers have also changed from the larger broadsheet format to the **Berliner** (or compact size). Content is continuing to change in a bid to attract reader attention, with opinion and analysis substantially increasing and hard news content continuing to decrease in a bid to stem falling circulation. Celebrity and ‘soft’ news stories now sit side by side with hard news as the once clear line between entertainment and news continues to blur. Today, stories about war in the Ukraine or Middle East sit on the front page beside stories about Lindsay Lohan’s latest antics, BBC *Top Gear* host Jeremy Clarkson’s latest bad behaviour and Lady Gaga and Taylor Kinney’s nuptials.

#Podcast: From iPod broadCAST; an audio broadcast that has been converted to an MP3 file or other audio file format for playback in a digital player. Although today many podcasts are played on a computer, the original idea was to listen on a portable device; hence, the ‘pod’ name from ‘iPod’. Although podcasts are mostly verbal, they may contain music, images and video.

#Berliner: A compact newspaper measuring 470mm × 315mm, which has become a popular newspaper format in recent years.

Mobile news

In the past few years, more and more consumers have shifted to mobile devices to consume media. In America in 2011, more than a quarter of the population (27 per cent), were accessing news on mobile devices (Rosentiel & Mitchell 2012: 2); and in 2014, the American Press Institute found that 56 per cent of adult Americans were using a mobile phone and 29 per cent reported using a tablet to access news (American Press Institute 2014).

In the digital space, professional journalists have taken up the practice of having real-time conversations with their audiences through these same mobile devices. Twitter and other micro-blogging sites have provided new platforms for a collaborative model of news production.

CONCLUSION

Journalism was born out of Johannes Gutenberg’s printing press and the development of the newspaper industry. Today, we live in a multimedia world where the first mass medium has to fight for its share of the news market. Newspapers (whether accessed in print or digitally) remain the primary source Americans turn to for news about government and civic affairs (Rosentiel & Mitchell 2012: 3). In Australia, the story is more significant than just the demise of an industry business model, according to Eric Beecher. He argues that in a ‘small robust democracy with relatively little commercial quality journalism, it has the makings of a civic catastrophe’. Beecher writes that the serious journalism of influence in Australia, apart from the government-funded **ABC**, resides mainly in four newspapers—the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Age*, the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Australian*—and that for most of their existence these papers have been:

#ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the Australian Broadcasting Commission from 1932 until 1983); Australia’s public broadcaster, which is funded by the federal government rather than advertising.

pillars of the Australian democratic infrastructure, sitting alongside the parliament, the bureaucracy and the courts as the enforcement agencies of public accountability

Part 1 Introducing Media and Journalism

and scrutiny. They are the ones who have done the shoe-leather reporting, invested in thoughtful analysis, exposed corruption and maladministration, campaigned on issues they believed in and undertaken the expensive and risky investigative reporting that has held power to account. (Beecher 2013)

While the threat to serious 'Fourth Estate' journalism remains real as long as the business model for news in the digital age remains elusive, one thing is certain: the ease of access to news across multiple devices 24/7 has been a boon for the consumption of news. More people are now consuming news than at any other time in history. What that news looks like, who it best serves and who produces it may still be unfolding, but the future is in the mobile, digital space. Journalist and digital entrepreneur Larry Downes writes: 'Once the paper is printed, it's dead, but digital content can live forever—commented-upon, repurposed, and repackaged' (Downes 2014). And it is the digital world's ability to publish breaking news almost instantaneously, while allowing yesterday's news to remain active and interactive—along with the offer of a collaborative experience for audiences and journalists—that promises an exciting future for journalism and the production of news.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Gutenberg's screw press transformed the printing industry and led to the birth of mass media.
- News has always been a commodity.
- John Wilkes's notion of the free press remains with us today.
- The arrival of the telegraph led to the inverted pyramid style of reporting.
- Lord Northcliffe in England produced the first tabloid newspaper and created a newspaper model based on scandal, crime, sport and pictorial human-interest stories that remains popular to this day.
- The 'golden age' of Australian newspapers coincided with the era when classified advertising was referred to as the 'rivers of gold'.
- The drying up of the classified advertising revenue stream has led to a transformation in newspapers and news journalism in the 21st century
- News delivered on mobile devices across multiple platforms is the way audiences increasingly consume news in the 21st century.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why did Gutenberg's press transform journalism and how is it similar to recent technological transformations?
- 2 Why was a stamp duty imposed upon newspapers in the 19th century?
- 3 In what ways is Julian Assange like John Wilkes?
- 4 Map the ways news has been a commodity in previous centuries. What does this mean for notions of a free press and the Fourth Estate?
- 5 Is the 'golden Age' of Australian journalism a nostalgic interpretation of history by old journalists, or was something special happening in journalism at this time?

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3

THE FOURTH ESTATE

NICOLA GOC

INTRODUCTION

What is the Fourth Estate and is it still alive in the global digital age? This is the big question we are going to attempt to unpack in this chapter. In recent times there has been some discussion about whether the Fourth Estate has become something different in the global digital space, and the term 'Fifth Estate' has at times been used to define 21st-century global digital journalism practice. However, in this chapter journalism is referred to as the **Fourth Estate**, defined as 'a group of journalists practising watchdog journalism, holding the powerful to account'. The new platforms and delivery systems have changed journalism, but the ideal of the Fourth Estate remains relevant. Journalism has always adapted and changed with the advent of new technologies and platforms, but the fundamental principles of journalism as the Fourth Estate have remained the same.

#Fourth Estate: a group of journalists practising watchdog journalism, holding the powerful to account.

One place to start with understanding what is meant by the 'Fourth Estate' today is to look at a recent moment in time that has been seen as a crisis for journalism: the *News of the World* scandal in Britain in 2005–2011. For many watching the industry

implode, the scandal produced a clear demarcation between two kinds of journalism: the good versus the bad—the sensational scandal-mongering tabloids versus the noble, serious broadsheets. On the surface it may appear a straightforward way to reach an understanding of good and bad news journalism and to determine journalism's place and value within democracy—but it may not be that simple.

This chapter examines the notion of the Fourth Estate in the 21st century by posing the following questions.

- What is the Fourth Estate?
- What are the historical foundations of the Fourth Estate?
- Are we witnessing the demise of the Fourth Estate?
- Has infotainment threatened the Fourth Estate?
- Has the advent of the internet threatened the Fourth Estate?
- What are the new models for the Fourth Estate?

By the end of this chapter you should have an understanding of what is meant by the term 'the Fourth Estate', and you should be able to form an argument about the relevance and importance of the news media in the past and today.

We will unpack the various components of the Fourth Estate—its historical foundations, the transitions from traditional to 'new' media and the divisions within content—a divide that is often referred to as the 'tabloid' (low-brow scandal-mongering popular press) versus the 'serious' broadsheet journalism at the noble end where our ideals and understandings of the Fourth Estate are founded. Then we will return to see if we are any closer to understanding the status of the Fourth Estate today and reflect upon why it matters.

THE NEWS OF THE WORLD SCANDAL

Let's get the difficult stuff out of the way before we reflect on the Fourth Estate's origins and move on to analyse what the Fourth Estate means in today's multi-mediated, fragmented, global digital market.

The *News of the World* phone hacking scandal in Britain goes to the crux of the perceived demise of the Fourth Estate. And, as Rupert Murdoch knows, public perception is everything. You can only obfuscate, spin and bluff for so long before the public wises up. The scandal involved the exposure of systemic unethical and illegal practices by journalists and editors at Britain's most popular, and most profitable, Sunday newspaper, the tabloid *News of the World* owned by Rupert Murdoch.

The newspaper was launched in 1843 as a scandal sheet, with the owner John Browne Bell focusing on crime, vice and scandal. It was highly profitable and under Murdoch's influence it was at one time the biggest-selling English language newspaper in the world. Rupert Murdoch bought the newspaper in 1969 and in 1984 changed the dimensions to the tabloid format and shifted the focus of the content to cover more stories on celebrity scandals and populist news. Standard journalism practice at the *News* included journalists dressing in disguise to gather information and private detectives being employed to capture damning evidence.

‘Journalism itself is reeking’

Initial investigations into allegations of royal phone hacking, police bribery and journalists exercising improper influence on citizens in pursuit of stories about the royal family were conducted in 2005. It all began when *News of the World* published a story about Prince William injuring his knee. The royal household believed the only way the paper could have known was if they had listened in to the prince's phone. They asked the police to investigate. In 2006 it was revealed that royal reporter Clive Goodman and a private investigator Glenn Mulcaire had tapped into messages left on mobile phones of royal aides. They had illegally gained access to hundreds of mobile phone voicemail accounts. The newspaper claimed that the behaviour was isolated to a few staff and the matter was seemingly resolved with the conviction in 2007 of Goodman and Mulcaire. Goodman was jailed for four months. The paper's editor, Andy Coulson, said he had known nothing about the men's actions but nevertheless resigned. Within a short time the then leader of the opposition, David Cameron, hired Coulson as his communications chief.

The *Guardian*

While public and media interest in the story waned, the *Guardian* investigative journalist Nick Davies continued to pursue the story in the face of police indifference and ridicule from rival newspapers. He believed that the practice of phone hacking was more widespread and turned to sources he had cultivated during three decades at the *Guardian*. Davies's report in July 2009 detailed allegations of phone hacking and police bribes of more than £100,000 to Metropolitan police officers. He made claims that the phone hacking activities went far beyond the activities of royal editor Clive Goodman.

Over the next two years, the *Guardian* continued to pursue the scandal. In February 2010, the *Guardian* reported that three mobile phone companies had discovered that over 100 of their customers had had their voicemails hacked. Reports of incorrect procedures and disclosures by police investigating the phone hacking allegations followed. On 24 February 2010, the Culture, Media and Sport Committee issued their report condemning the testimony of *News of the World* journalists and editors referring to 'deliberate obfuscation' and 'collective amnesia' and condemned the refusal of News International Chief Executive Rebekah Brooks to appear before the committee. The committee concluded: 'We strongly condemn this behaviour which reinforces the widely held impression that the press generally regard themselves as unaccountable and that News International in particular has sought to conceal the truth about what really occurred' (Elliott 2011).

Andy Coulson

Throughout 2010, the *Guardian* revealed further damning details of phone hacking and evidence that, under the editorship of Andy Coulson, it was systemic and involved six *News of the World* journalists. One of these, Paul McMullan, told the *Guardian* that Coulson knew that his reporters were engaging in unlawful acts.

In April 2010, it emerged that an assistant commissioner with the Metropolitan Police, who was the officer responsible for overseeing the original 2006 Scotland Yard inquiry into allegations of phone hacking at *News of the World*, had quit the police force to take up a job as a columnist for News

International. In September 2010, after a six-month investigation, the *New York Times* published new allegations and further evidence of systemic phone hacking under Andy Coulson, leading to the announcement of the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry. The Metropolitan Police also said they would re-examine allegations and would examine any new information.

In October 2010, Channel 4's *Dispatches* program exposed allegations from a former senior journalist at *News of the World* who alleged that Coulson had personally listened to messages obtained through phone hacking. The growing revelations in the press and public, along with the findings of civil cases, forced the Press Complaints Commission and the police to investigate. News International itself held an in-house investigation.

In January 2011, the *Guardian*'s Nick Davies reported that police had evidence that thousands of people—from celebrities to politicians and sports stars—had been targeted by private investigators working for the paper. Evidence emerged from the civil case by actress Sienna Miller that saw the Crown Prosecution Service announce a review of evidence gathered during the Metropolitan Police's original inquiry; the police announced a new investigation, Operation Weeting, to look into allegations of phone hacking.

'The Bugger Bugged'

In April 2011, actor Hugh Grant published an explosive article in the *New Statesman*, 'The Bugger Bugged' (Grant 2011) about a chance conversation he had had with Paul McMullan, former journalist for *News of the World*. Grant taped the conversation in which McMullan told him that the editors at the *News of the World* and the *Daily Mail* had ordered journalists to engage in illegal phone tapping and had done so with the full knowledge of senior politicians.

He also told Grant that every British prime minister from Margaret Thatcher onwards had cultivated a close relationship with Rupert Murdoch. He talked of the friendship between David Cameron and Rebekah Brooks (nee Wade): 'Cameron is very much in debt to Rebekah Wade for helping him not quite win the election ... So that was my submission to parliament—that Cameron's either a liar or an idiot' (Grant 2011). McMullan also told Grant that '20 per cent of the Met has taken backhanders from tabloid hacks' and had a motive to not look into phone hacking allegations at *News of the World*. Grant, as a high-profile actor who was himself a victim of unethical practices at the *News*, had turned the tables on the press. His story sparked further widespread public interest in the scandal.

BUT WHO WATCHES THE WATCHERS?

In 2009, the satirical magazine *Private Eye* revealed that the *Guardian* was holding back on information in order to avoid 'all out war' with the *News of the World*. The *Guardian* had not disclosed its knowledge of another large payment in 2008 to one of the victims of phone hacking, Gordon Taylor, the chairman of the Professional Footballers' Association, by the directors of News Group. This payment showed that the awareness of the phone hacking and other illegal practices by *News of the World* journalists went to the highest levels. *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger resigned from the Press Complaints Commission, and the Commission reopened its inquiry into the matter. The *Guardian* continued to publish revelations of out-of-court payments to victims of phone hacking.

Milly Dowler

But it took another year for the scandal to truly explode into the public consciousness. Nick Davies's report for the *Guardian* on 9 July 2011 revealed that the *News of the World* had hacked the phone of a 13-year-old murder victim, Milly Dowler, and may have impeded a police investigation into her 2002 disappearance by deleting some of the messages: 'The *News of the World* illegally targeted the missing schoolgirl Milly Dowler and her family in March 2002, interfering with police inquiries into her disappearance, an investigation by the *Guardian* has established' (Davies 2011).

Davies later recalled: 'When I wrote the story about Milly Dowler, I sent an email to [my] editor saying I think this is the most powerful story so far. But I did not foresee the extent of the emotional impact' (Associated Press 2011). Until then, the public believed the phone hacking scandal affected only public figures—powerful people who played their own publicity games with the press. Consequently, the damage to the newspaper's brand was negligible and the public indignation muted. But the idea of reporters listening in to messages left for a murdered schoolgirl proved too much. And following further revelations that the paper had also hacked into the phone accounts of the relatives of deceased soldiers and victims of the 7 July 2009 London bombings, indignation turned to outrage.

Within days, Murdoch made the decision to close the newspaper and Cameron announced the Leveson inquiry that would look into the phone hacking and police bribery allegations, and also consider the wider culture and ethics of British newspaper industry. The editorial in the *Economist* declared in July 2011 that while the scandal was a stain on the *News of the World* and on Rupert Murdoch's News International, 'the stench is much more widespread and journalism itself is reeking' (*Economist* 2011: 12). Interestingly, later that year, at the 2011 British Press Awards, the award for News Reporter of the Year went to a *News of the World* journalist, Mazher Mahmood, the 'fake sheikh', who hid his identity and exposed cricket corruption. The Newspaper of the Year in 2011 was the *Guardian*.

The *Guardian* alleged that hacking victims included the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, Conservative MP Boris Johnson, publicist Max Clifford and others, including actors and sports stars. The *Guardian* also reported that the *News of the World*'s parent company, News Group, paid out more than £1 million to settle a number of legal cases that threatened to reveal evidence of journalists using illegal methods to obtain stories, including not only phone hacking but also illicitly accessing tax records, social security files and bank statements. It also reported that the paper had paid a further £1 million to three people who were victims of illegal phone hacking, ensuring each of the complainants signed a secrecy (or 'gag') clause before payment.

In light of the *Guardian*'s reports, the Metropolitan Police Service reviewed the original 2006 investigation but decided there was no new evidence requiring further action and the case was not reopened. Labour MP Tom Watson was concerned by the allegations of press misconduct and, along with several colleagues, played a key role in bringing the phone hacking revelations to the public.

'Wilful blindness'

A report to a parliamentary select committee in May 2012 concluded that Murdoch 'exhibited wilful blindness to what was going on in his companies and publications' and that he was 'not a fit person to exercise stewardship of a major international company' (Burns & Samaiya 2012).

A journalist in an editorial meeting with Murdoch and other journalists secretly filmed the media baron telling journalists that the investigators inquiring into the phone hacking scandal were 'totally incompetent' and acted over 'next to nothing' and that the investigative methods were 'part of the culture of Fleet Street'. When the tape was later aired on Channel 4 News, it further damaged Murdoch's reputation as a fit and proper person to have stewardship over a media empire.

Rupert Murdoch was called before the Leveson inquiry and ducked and weaved awkward questions. Eventually, in the face of a public backlash, he tepidly apologised for his journalists' behaviour, while continuing to maintain he knew nothing of the unethical and illegal practices. While Murdoch survived criminal charges, the scandal and the public pressure forced News Corp to cancel its proposed takeover of the British satellite broadcaster BSkyB. There was no likelihood in the wake of the scandal that Murdoch would have been considered a fit and proper person to own such a licence.

By any measure of journalistic ethics and practice, the acts by both journalists and their editors at the *News of the World* were unconscionable. The behaviour had been going on for a long time. The newspaper was one of the most profitable and highest circulation Sunday papers in the English-speaking world. Scandal sells. Muckracking sells. Infotainment, titillation, royal gossip, and sports and celebrity scandals all sell because a large proportion of the population want to read these stories.

We will come back to the *News of the World* scandal a little later. But now let's go back in time to Thomas Carlyle and the first iteration of the Fourth Estate to better understand how we came to the moment in 2011 when the Fourth Estate was brought into such disrepute.

THE FOURTH ESTATE IN HISTORY

More than 250 years ago, English playwright and journalist Henry Fielding (1707–54) introduced the idea of the Fourth Estate. Fielding was a notable playwright, whose sharp burlesques satirising the government of the day gained him the wrath of the then prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole. In a bid to stifle Fielding's voice, the British government introduced the *Theatrical Licensing Act*, which prevented him from staging his political satire. Undeterred, Fielding became the editor of a journal that continued to scrutinise Walpole's government. It was in 1752 that Fielding famously wrote in his *Covent Garden Journal*:

None of our political writers ... take notice of any more than three estates, namely, Kings, Lords and Commons ... passing by in silence that very large and powerful body which form the Fourth Estate in this community ... The Mob.

It was the actions of another Englishman, the radical journalist, newspaper proprietor, parliamentarian and notorious libertine John Wilkes (1725–98), that forever cemented the notion of a free press (for more on Wilkes, see Chapter 2). Wilkes is of particular interest to us today because, more than 240 years after his death, we have seen another maverick journalist, editor and publisher in Julian Assange. By publishing secret diplomatic cables and government documents, Assange has shown the world how a new style of journalism—a collaboration between old-world journalism and the new-world journalism of the internet—can enliven the Fourth Estate.

James Mill

In the late 18th century, another Briton played a significant role in the development of the Fourth Estate and a free press. Scottish philosopher James Mill (1773–1836) advocated for press freedom because, he said, it could make known ‘the conduct of the individuals who have chosen to wield the powers of government’ (cited in Jarlov n.d.). At about the same time, Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), America’s third president and author of the US *Declaration of Independence*, reiterated Mill’s position, arguing that citizens needed access to reliable information about matters of state. Jefferson famously said: ‘Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate for a moment to prefer the latter’ (Jefferson 1787: 48–9). However, while Jefferson understood the importance of having a free press, he did not always speak kindly of the Fourth Estate, once stating that ‘the advertisements are the most truthful part of a newspaper’.

CARLYLE’S FOURTH ESTATE

The most quoted reference to the Fourth Estate is by Edmund Burke, an Anglo-Irish statesman, author and political philosopher who served in the House of Commons, and was one of the finest parliamentary orators of his day. His pronouncement was quoted by noted Victorian historian and author Thomas Carlyle in 1841:

Does not ... the parliamentary debate go on ... in so far more comprehensive way, out of Parliament altogether? Edmund Burke said that there were three Estates in Parliament, but in the Reporter’s Gallery yonder, there sat a Fourth Estate more important than they all. (Carlyle 1841: 349–50)

Thomas Carlyle also argued that printing was equivalent to democracy. Invent writing, he said, and democracy is inevitable:

Whoever can speak, speaking now to the whole nation, becomes a power, a branch of government, with inalienable weight in law-making, in all acts of authority. It matters not what rank he has, what revenues or garnitures: the requisite thing is that he have a tongue which others will listen to; this and nothing more is requisite. (Carlyle 1841: 349–50)

Here Carlyle was describing the newly found power of the man of letters, who would evolve into the news reporter of today. When Carlyle was writing about the Fourth Estate in the 19th century, it was accepted that the other three powers were the priesthood, the aristocracy (the House of Lords) and the House of Commons. Later, these powers were seen as the church, parliament and the judiciary, while today, in our more secular society, the three powers are generally regarded as the government, the public service and the judiciary.

The 19th-century press soon developed into the watchdog not just of the first three estates but also of all those in positions of power. As we have seen in the previous chapter on the rise of newspapers, the rise of a radical press in the early 19th century saw unprecedented numbers of newly literate citizens gaining access to printing presses and establishing newspapers that addressed the social issues of the day. The radical press gained a large audience, establishing unprecedented political discourse among the working class.

Independent of political pressures and financially self-sufficient, the Fourth Estate was difficult for governments to control, so in 1819 the British government introduced a newspaper stamp duty. When the tax was eventually repealed in 1855, the subsequent free-market environment saw a transformation of the newspaper industry. Improving technologies meant that the cost of production dropped as the rate of production rose, providing the masses with access to the cheap penny press. With industrialisation came commercialisation and a reliance on advertising revenue, which transformed news into a very profitable commodity.

THE FOURTH ESTATE IN MODERN TIMES

For more than 200 years, journalists have seen their role as informing the public and ensuring accountability. However, there are those who would argue that rather than scrutinising government, business and the powerful elite, the Fourth Estate works to reinforce and sustain these institutions. Certainly, in totalitarian regimes, government-controlled media are instruments of the state, but it is also claimed that in Western democracies some media outlets uncritically promote, rather than scrutinise, government ideologies. Radical left-wing thinker Noam Chomsky, for instance, argues through his **propaganda model** (Herman & Chomsky 1994) that the mass media are tools used by their owners and by governments to deliver a capitalist ideology rather than scrutinise government and the powerful. He argues that the media work hand in glove with governments and big business. From the political economy perspective, the mass media are seen as representing the interests of those who own them. Chomsky argues that these owners influence public discourse for their own commercial and ideological motives (Herman & Chomsky 1994).

What Chomsky is really talking about here is a form of hegemony, which we define at length in Chapter 1. We look in greater detail at the term 'ideology' in Chapter 9.

An example of Chomsky's argument is one we have already considered in Chapter 1: media mogul Rupert Murdoch's influence over his newspapers during the lead-up to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. As you may recall, Murdoch publicly declared his support for the proposed invasion, and also outlined his viewpoint in a letter to each of the 175 editors of his newspapers across three continents. All of his newspapers took a pro-invasion editorial stance. At the time, media commentator Roy Greenslade (2003), a former editor and journalist, wrote:

What a guy! You have got to admit that Rupert Murdoch is one canny press tycoon because he has an unerring ability to choose editors across the world who think just like him. How else can we explain the extraordinary unity of thought in his newspaper empire about the need to make war on Iraq? After an exhaustive survey of the highest-selling and most influential papers across the world owned by Murdoch's News Corporation, it is clear that all are singing from the same hymn sheet.

We also saw the capitalist model determine journalism practice at the *News of the World* as Rupert Murdoch and News Ltd had their eye on profits before responsible, ethical journalism. This is nothing new. During the early 20th century the English newspaper lords developed the tabloid newspaper industry built on a diet of scandal, crime and sport. And Rupert Murdoch was not the first media baron to influence governments: Viscounts Northcliffe and Rothermere, and Barons Riddell, Dalziel and Beaverbrook all played highly influential roles not only in promoting but also in influencing government policies on major decisions in the First and Second World Wars.

propaganda model:
Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's argument that the mass media are tools used by their owners and by governments to deliver capitalist ideology, rather than to scrutinise governments and other powerful groups in society.

TWITTER AND THE FOURTH ESTATE

Journalists quickly adopted the new micro-blogging tool as a way of breaking news and communicating with their audience in real time. It is believed that news about the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks broke first on Twitter. Journalist Neha Viswanathan said:

Even before I actually heard of [the attack] on the news, I saw stuff about this on Twitter. People were sending in messages about what they were hearing. There were at least five or six blogs from people who were trapped or who were very close to what happened. (Busari 2009: 1)

The *Guardian* writer Sali Hughes, who has more than 20,000 followers on Twitter, identifies the turning point as the Trafigura scandal of 2009. On 12 October 2009, the *Guardian* was banned from reporting the contents of a parliamentary question relating to a toxic dumping in the Ivory Coast in 2006. Despite the gagging order, the story quickly spread through blogs and social networking websites, and the power of social media was evident when overnight the name of the London-based oil trader, Trafigura, topped the list of trending topics on Twitter (Chhabara 2009). However, there is some blurring between the lines of journalism and activism in the Twitter space. Beginning in 2010, Arab Spring organisers were using Twitter both to plan their actions and to share their successes with the world, which led to massive news coverage and crowdsourced information and imagery in major publications (Flynn n.d.).

Major news stories like the Boston Marathon bombings were broken on Twitter. Barry Ritholtz from the *Washington Post* recalls his Twitter feed lighting up within moments of the first explosion at the Boston Marathon: 'Someone in the office yelled: 'two explosions at the Boston Marathon, may be terrorism'. Within seconds there were first-hand reports, photos, even video circulating' (Ritholtz 2013). News of the tragic death of Amy Winehouse was circulating on Twitter twenty minutes after she was found and forty minutes before the story was reported on mainstream news websites and television (Hart 2015).

Some sections of the news media, however, are still struggling with the concept of journalists having a real-time dialogue with their audience. An editor at the *Australian* newspaper claimed in a 2013 editorial that Twitter is contributing to journalism's decline and that it:

exists as some sort of 'alternative media universe' run by narcissists with no hardcore news values. It proclaims that 'this mad plunge into social media-driven journalism would be mildly diverting if it wasn't so dangerous to the future of news reporting', before conceding that Twitter is a wonderful tool for journalism when it comes to, um, marketing. (Clune 2013)

NEWS AUDIENCES AS CONSUMERS

There has also been a significant shift in recent decades in the way media proprietors view their audiences. Media owners now see readers, listeners and viewers as the **consumers** of their commodities, in much the same way as the owners of retail chains see their customers as the consumers of the products they sell. As Hirst and Patching (2005: 104) claim, media industries today 'treat their audiences as "consumers" of news, entertainment, information, sport, and associated

#Consumerist model:

the manufacture of news as a profit-driven model; news is seen primarily as a business enterprise, with news as a commodity.

product packaging'. Again, this shift might not be as recent as we think. Fifty years ago, at the height of Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist campaign in the USA, television and radio journalist Ed Murrow criticised the media for entertaining the masses at a time when they should have been informing the public of the threat to free speech and personal freedom.

Good Night, and Good Luck

The film *Good Night, and Good Luck* (2005) tells the story of Ed Murrow's career. In his famous address to the Radio–Television News Directors Association and Foundation, Murrow (1958) told the American people:

if there are any historians about fifty or a hundred years from now, and there should be preserved the kinescopes for one week of all three networks, they will there find recorded in black and white, or color, evidence of decadence, escapism and insulation from the realities of the world in which we live ... during the daily peak viewing periods, television in the main insulates us from the realities of the world in which we live. If this state of affairs continues, we may alter an advertising slogan to read: LOOK NOW, PAY LATER.

Fifty years later, Ed Murrow's prescient words resonate in a world unsettled by threats to global peace, and where hard news and investigative reporting are being increasingly replaced by infotainment. In the early 21st century, celebrity news often dictates the news agenda. While often quoted, Murrow's criticism of the lack of endeavour by journalists and news corporations, at a time when the USA was swept up in a wave of anticommunist sentiment, had little influence on stemming the tide of the commercialisation of news. With an increasingly affluent consumerist public that demands to be entertained as well as informed, the role and relevance of the crusading investigative journalist—the muckraker—as the representative of the Fourth Estate is increasingly being challenged.

‘THE INFOTAINMENT MONSTER THAT ATE THE NEWS INDUSTRY’

Infotainment, it has been argued, is not only now fulfilling the role of the Fourth Estate, but is also engaging, informing and entertaining the public far more effectively than the traditional news outlets. Australian media academic Stephen Stockwell says that television infotainment (here he includes subgenres such as lifestyle shows, reality television, docusoaps, **docugames**, tabloid news, talk shows, **mockumentary** and news sitcoms), when considered as a totality, actually offers greater diversity of viewpoints, acuity of representation and depth of critique than traditional news and current affairs programs in Australia presently provide (Stockwell 2004: 14).

Stockwell's consumer-driven media model argues that reality television 'provides a more intense account of experience than either news or entertainment can supply and a deeper reading of what it is to be a human' (Stockwell 2004). He points to amateur footage of natural disasters, which places the viewer with the citizen at the dramatic moment of challenge—for example,

Docugames: Interactive reality games where players are involved in role-play scenarios that are based on real events. They blend reality with interactive entertainment allowing the player to control and alter historical figures and events. Throughout the game there are links to articles and interviews from or about the real event.

the amateur footage of the devastating 2004 Boxing Day tsunami—provides an immediate and shocking understanding of the horror and devastation of a disaster in a way that no journalist reporting in the aftermath could hope to accomplish. By 2011, traditional news outlets had learnt their lesson, and had the resources in place—along with a well-established online presence—to reverse this deficiency in disaster coverage. The news coverage of the 2010–11 Queensland floods, for example, saw mainstream news journalists filing reports and footage from the epicentre of the unfolding floods. It was this ability of journalists across the vast flood regions to file timely stories and footage of the unfolding disaster—both on traditional formats (particularly television and radio) and online—that brought audiences back to mainstream news coverage.

Audiences today are actually consuming more news than at any other time in history. They are engaging with news and current affairs through outlets other than news bulletins. In general, it is evident from the ratings that the public are turning to the internet and YouTube, and Facebook, as well as infotainment shows and tabloid current affairs for their information. Stockwell says infotainment shows on Australian television such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor*, *Good News Week*, *Better Homes and Gardens* and *Getaway* and tabloid current affairs programs such as *Today Tonight* and *A Current Affair* offer ‘opportunities for new forms of democracy to develop based in an expansion of social reflexivity’ (Stockwell 2004: 17).

A decade on from this argument, we are witnessing a proliferation of reality television shows (which are cheaper to produce than drama) and a flood of entertaining, titillating content on the internet, on YouTube and on mobile media; and this may lead audiences to feel satisfied about having personal agency over their consumption of media. However, important questions remain: how well informed are citizens on matters of significance, and how motivated are they to seek out serious content about issues of importance to society?

There is no doubt that the tabloid entertainment style of journalism captures our attention. In her work on media effects, Grabe (2000, cited in Stockwell 2004: 7–8) found that the flamboyant tabloid—or infotainment style of packaging news and **current affairs**—increased audience arousal and attention. And we know from the *News of the World* story that newspapers that report on salacious scandals and vice, crime, sports and the bizarre have always been highly profitable, while ‘serious’ journalism has never been financially profitable and has relied on advertising to subsidise newsrooms (see the discussion of the ‘golden age’ of Australian journalism in Chapter 2).

Academic John Hartley, who calls journalism the ‘sense-making practice of modernity’, and sees it as the very foundation of democratic politics and the primary wiring of popular culture, argues that the ‘tabloidisation of journalism is not a diminution of its ambition, but an extension of its reach; another unfolding layer in the story of journalism’s role as the oxygen of democracy’ (cited in Hargreaves 2003: 23).

While audiences voraciously consume stories about Lady Gaga or Beyoncé, they still expect their news media to provide them with reliable information about important local, state, national and global issues from trustworthy sources in a timely manner, and to expose corruption and wrongdoing.

The former president of NBC News in the USA, Reuven Frank, said the following about the news media’s capitulation to audience demands for infotainment and entertainment: ‘This business of giving people what they want is a dope-pusher’s argument. News is something people don’t know they’re interested in until they hear about it. The job of a journalist is to take what’s important and make it interesting’ (Hickey 1998).

#Mockumentary:

A melding of the words ‘mock’ and ‘documentary’; a film or television program presented as a documentary recording real life but which is in fact fictional—a commonly used medium for parody and satire.

#Current affairs: The news media’s delivery of political and social events or issues of the present time, usually on television or radio.

epistemology: The use of logic, psychology, philosophy and linguistics to study knowledge and how it is processed by humans.

Carl Bernstein, veteran journalist of Watergate fame (cited in Stockwell 2004) maintains that the problem with news and news journalism today is **epistemological**: journalism has become ‘illusory and delusory—disfigured, unreal and disconnected from the real context of our lives ... distorted by celebrity and the worship of celebrity; by the reduction of news to gossip; by sensationalism’. By giving way to the audience’s base desires, one commentator claimed that it was ‘the infotainment monster that ate the news industry’ (Rapping, cited in Stockwell 2004).

‘SOCIETY DOESN’T NEED NEWSPAPERS. WHAT WE NEED IS JOURNALISM’

According to Eric Beecher, in the past it was the journalists from Australia’s most respected newspapers, the *Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, who did the ‘shoe-leather reporting, invested in thoughtful analysis, exposed corruption and maladministration, campaigned on issues they believed in and undertaken the expensive and risky investigative reporting that has held power to account’ (Beecher 2013)—in other words they acted as the Fourth Estate. And Beecher laments the demise in the great newspapers (see Chapter 2). But as American media theorist Clay Shirky reminds us:

Society doesn’t need newspapers. What we need is journalism. For a century, the imperatives to strengthen journalism and to strengthen newspapers have been so tightly wound as to be indistinguishable. That’s been a fine accident to have, but when that accident stops, as it is stopping before our eyes, we’re going to need lots of other ways to strengthen journalism instead. (Shirky 2009)

While newspapers remain the main employers of journalists around the world, and print newspapers in some countries—for example, Japan, China, India and Russia—are increasing, for most Western countries the online platform is seen as the future for news. Halfway through the second decade of the 21st century, the online news providers of the first decade, such as *Huffington Post* and *Crikey*, have now cemented their place in the mainstream news process. *Huffington Post* was launched in 2005 as a liberal/left commentary outlet and alternative news aggregator, and such was its success that in 2011 it was acquired by AOL (an American multinational mass media corporation) for more than \$300 million. In 2012, *Huffington Post* was the first digital news media organisation to win a Pulitzer Prize for a 10-part series by senior military correspondent, David Wood, entitled ‘Beyond the Battlefield’. It reported on the lives of extensively wounded veterans and their families and won the Pulitzer Prize in National Reporting.

THE COST OF FOURTH ESTATE JOURNALISM

Newsrooms are now working with less staff and on much smaller budgets. At the same time, the most important end of journalism, the part that fuels democracy—the investigative journalism that exposes corruption and wrongdoing by those in government and in positions of power—is very expensive. In Australia, for instance, the cost of Freedom of Information Requests—that is,

requests to access government documents not publicly available—is often prohibitive to news organisations. The ABC’s Freedom of Information Editor, Michael McKinnon, says the cost can run into many thousands of dollars and is often out of the reach of newsrooms (Aedy 2015). Along with the cost of accessing government documents, another challenge to good journalism today is the nature of 24/7 digital news and the pressure to publish. When journalists are wading through piles of documents laden with complex and confusing information on multifaceted topics, and are expected to provide accurate, comprehensive, balanced and coherent news reports within a very short space of time, the risk of inaccuracies and unbalanced reports is high.

In Australia, public servants have a maximum of 40 hours to put information together for journalists, which again means that sometimes important information is not forthcoming and journalists cannot adequately fulfil their watchdog role. McKinnon points to the Mr Fluffy tragedy in Canberra—in which people have died from the asbestos in their homes—as an example of a system failing to protect citizens. McKinnon believes if the information held by the government about Mr Fluffy had been provided in a timely manner, people would have been aware of the issue much earlier and perhaps lives could have been saved. It is important for society and governments that journalists are allowed access in an affordable framework to government documents (Aedy 2015).

WIKILEAKS

The public reaction to WikiLeaks not only shows how interested the global community is in significant news, but also that, by using the **WikiLeaks** model, serious Fourth Estate journalism has an opportunity to re-engage with its audience.

Australian Julian Assange set up WikiLeaks in 2006 as a depository for documents leaked anonymously from governments, businesses and other powerful international players. He was inspired by the web encyclopaedia written by volunteers, Wikipedia, and also by the leak of the Pentagon Papers by Daniel Ellsberg to the *New York Times* during the Vietnam war, which ultimately led to a United States Supreme Court ruling that ‘only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government’ (Standage 2011: 12).

#WikiLeaks:

A non-profit online media organisation that publishes otherwise unavailable documents from anonymous sources.

Anonymous drop boxes

WikiLeaks’s most significant contribution to journalism was the creation of a system whereby sources and whistleblowers could share secret information through anonymous drop boxes. In 2010, Assange abandoned the wiki-style approach and stepped into the realm of journalism by adopting a new, editorialising tone, and describing his volunteers as ‘journalists’ and himself as the editor-in-chief. He disallowed comments or edits, and worked with an editorial team to vet material from anonymous sources. According to the WikiLeaks website:

WikiLeaks is a non-profit media organisation dedicated to bringing important news and information to the public. We provide an innovative, secure and anonymous way for independent sources around the world to leak information to our journalists. We publish material of ethical, political and historical significance while keeping the identity of our

sources anonymous, thus providing a universal way for the revealing of suppressed and censored injustices. (WikiLeaks 2011c.)

In its first three years WikiLeaks acted as a database of leaked documents that news organisations could source. The site published leaked documents on a wide range of subjects including corruption in Kenya, the Church of Scientology, Sarah Palin's emails, documents on the British nationalism party and a Peruvian oil scandal.

Collateral murder

WikiLeaks gained worldwide attention in April 2010 when it posted a video on a website called 'Collateral Murder', which showed US forces killing Iraqi civilians and journalists. Three months later, WikiLeaks released 76,900 secret documents about the war in Afghanistan, called 'Afghan War Diary' and collaborated with some of the most influential newspapers in the world—the *Guardian*, the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*—to publish a cache of some 75,000 documents relating to the war in Afghanistan. Another cache of 400,000 documents about the war in Iraq was released in October 2010, and in November 2010 five newspapers (including the *Sydney Morning Herald*) began to publish highlights from more than 250,000 diplomatic cables sent by American embassies round the world, the largest set of confidential documents ever to be released into the public domain. According to WikiLeaks: 'The documents will give people around the world an unprecedented insight into the US Government's foreign activities' (WikiLeaks 2011c).

Assange falters

But the new cosy relationship between Assange and the traditional Fourth Estate was breaking down at the same time as Assange was fighting an extradition request in the British courts from Swedish prosecutors who wanted to question him about two alleged sexual assaults.

Nick Davies from the *Guardian*, who broke the Milly Dowler story in the *News of the World* scandal, clashed with Assange, whom he had persuaded to work with the *Guardian* in releasing WikiLeaks material. The two men fell out after Davies reported that Swedish police were investigating allegations that Assange sexually assaulted two women. Some of Assange's supporters criticised the *Guardian* for running the story against such a key **source**, but Davies says that is how journalists become corrupt: 'by staying away from stories about people they are close to' (Associated Press 2011).

When Assange was imprisoned in London in December 2010 to await possible extradition to Sweden (a situation with resonances of John Wilkes; see Chapter 2), leading law experts, including Australian barrister Geoffrey Robertson, offered their services free of charge, and funds came into the organisation to assist Assange.

In the USA, Republicans announced that they wanted Assange extradited to the USA to face charges, and that they were willing to pass new legislation specifically tailored to allow this to happen. The US Department of Justice began looking at the *Espionage Act* of 1917 to see if any charges could be laid. Even traditional journalism organisations in the USA were initially critical of WikiLeaks and denied it was 'journalism'. The Society of Professional Journalists and the Newspaper Association of America, which had been working for years with members of Congress to pass a federal reporter's shield law, felt their efforts were 'imperiled by WikiLeaks' (Peters 2010).

Source: In journalistic terms, someone who communicates information as a journalist.

The groups said the website does not do journalism and thus the shield would not protect it (Lee 2010). The executive director of the Reporters' Committee, Lucy Dalglish, criticised WikiLeaks as 'not journalism', claiming it was 'data dissemination' (cited in Lee 2010).

Is WikiLeaks 'journalism'?

Journalism academic and member of the Ohio bar, Douglas Peters, argues that WikiLeaks and Assange would fail the US First Amendment-based journalistic privilege because, 'WikiLeaks is not involved in investigative reporting and that the content disseminated is not news ... it is not engaged in investigative reporting, a process that involves more than the mere dumping of documents and requires the minimization of harm' (Peters 2010: 11). Journalist Douglas Lee saw this announcement as 'journalists marking their territory':

Whatever awkwardness previously existed as journalists desiring a federal shield law wooed the legislators they're supposed to be watching, it's now worse. In recent weeks, the two groups have publicly joined forces to exclude WikiLeaks from possible protection under the bill. In doing so, journalists have managed both to look territorial and to endanger the independence they're striving to create. (Lee 2010)

Then New York Democrat and Senate sponsor of the *Free Flow of Information Act*, Charles Schumer, and Californian Senator Dianne Feinstein announced that they were 'working with representatives of the newspaper industry in crafting the new language that will explicitly exclude organisations like WikiLeaks—whose sole or primary purpose is to publish unauthorized disclosures of documents—from possible protection'. In response, Lee commented, 'It doesn't seem all that long ago that representatives of the newspaper industry would have recoiled from working with Congress to deny legal protection to anyone who leaked confidential or classified documents. Today, however, they seem happy to be doing so' (Lee 2010).

According to Lee, the president of the Society of Professional Journalists, Kevin Smith, acknowledged 'he was concerned that WikiLeaks's posting of the classified documents might derail the shield law. This is the closest we've come to getting something moved and it's unfortunate that this WikiLeaks situation's come up' (cited in Lee 2010). Lee argued that it would be 'more unfortunate, however, if journalism organisations, in their zeal to see a federal shield law finally pass, encouraged Congress to restrict the Act's protection to those who practised journalism only in a particular way' (Lee 2010).

The legacy of WikiLeaks

In June 2012, Assange entered the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and requested political asylum to avoid being extradited to Sweden to face the sexual assault charges, which could then lead to his extradition to the USA. There he could face much more serious charges of relating to the leaking of secret government documents, which could result in life imprisonment or even the death penalty. Several years on and Assange remains (at the time of writing, at least) in the embassy, although in March 2015 a compromise to the stalemate between Swedish authorities and Assange looked likely, with the Swedish prosecutors offering to travel to London to question Assange over the sexual assault allegations (which he has consistently denied).

But while the work of WikiLeaks has been less influential during the past few years, the legacy of WikiLeaks is significant. WikiLeaks showed traditional media the potential for practising watchdog journalism—the Fourth Estate—in the digital world. Its approach has been adopted by traditional news organisations as well as some newcomers, including Al Jazeera, the English-language version of the Arab news broadcaster based in Doha, which has set up a ‘transparency unit’ with a WikiLeaks-style anonymous drop box. The *Wall Street Journal* launched a drop box of its own in May 2011, but was criticised for not offering enough protection to leakers. ‘Everyone’s looking at the idea,’ said *Guardian* editor Alan Rusbridger, ‘but if you’re going to do it you have to make it really secure’ (Standage 2011: 13).

ARE BLOGS THE NEW ‘MOB’?

If J-bloggers are the new journalists (see the Introduction to this book for a discussion of J-blogging), then are **blogs** the new ‘mob’? Remember Henry Fielding’s claim: ‘None of our political writers ... takes notice of any more than three estates, namely, Kings, Lords and Commons ... passing by in silence that very large and powerful body which form the Fourth Estate in this community ... The Mob’? Media commentator Shelly Palmer refers to web blogs as **moblogs**, arguing that they form like ‘regular mobs’. She says that they can ‘be constructive or destructive, patriots or rebels—but unlike their flesh-and-blood counterparts, their ideas can have immense, virtually instantaneous impact on a worldwide platform’ (Palmer 2006). She likens moblogs to a living thing:

information ... is born, it evolves, it eats, it excretes, it mutates—but, interestingly, it can no longer die. This was true on a small scale even before the ‘great unwashed’ learned to blog. However, this is the first time in history that an idea (good or bad, true or false) can travel worldwide instantaneously and live on with a permanent, un-erasable, record of itself. (Palmer 2006)

Palmer says ‘the most interesting’ attribute of moblogs is the way they self-assemble, evolve into points of view, then metamorphose and mutate into the next phase of their existence—gaining or losing the power to influence their audience. She argues that it is a ‘fascinating twist’ on our ability to communicate, and for organisations that rely on central control—such as governments and corporations—it is not necessarily a good thing.

Blogs, or moblogs, are spontaneous, unedited ‘first takes’ on the issues of the day; they are creating a global public discourse on unlimited issues, providing everyone with a platform upon which to express his or her view, much like the soapbox in Speaker’s Corner at Sydney’s Hyde Park. But are these sites, and the bloggers who post their opinions on them, all representative of Henry Fielding’s ‘mob’ (the group of individuals sitting in the reporter’s gallery in parliament) or are these ‘mobloggers’ the other ‘mob’—that is, the masses protesting outside of the parliament? Is the new medium of the World Wide Web merely providing the soapbox—or the protest meeting place—for the masses in the 21st century? Does the speaker on the soapbox or the blogger act under the journalistic rubric of the Fourth Estate, or is she merely expressing a right as an individual to free speech?

One important point of difference sets the blogger apart from the public orator of times past: accountability. While the hecklers in the crowd would have publicly challenged the soapbox

Blog: An online journal comprising links and postings; both a noun and a verb with various connotations, such as ‘logger’ and ‘blogging’. Its origin is ‘weblog’, a regular online journal.

Moblog: A blog where participants appear to have like regular mobs, but unlike their flesh-and-blood counterparts, their ideas can have an instantaneous impact on a worldwide platform.

speaker—wanting to know where the speaker got his or her information, who was the source, and what was the agenda—today's web orators can sidestep accountability by posting opinions anonymously. Without accountability and without gatekeepers to question their utterances, anonymous bloggers face the criticism that they are no more than the poison-pen letter writers of the 21st century. These anonymous bloggers, who sidestep accountability, surely cannot claim the mantle of J-bloggers.

COLLABORATIVE JOURNALISM

At this tumultuous time in the Fourth Estate's history, something quite different is emerging: collaborative journalism. A new global online practice between journalists and their sources is developing, with sources working as producers of content by making videos, creating audio and writing stories, which they pass on to mainstream journalists to leverage their professional credibility and gain access to their distribution networks. As journalism struggles to find revenue streams in the digital world, philanthropic journalism is also rising with citizens willing to donate to support quality journalism under the Fourth Estate model. And it is not only the rich who are donating to the production of quality journalism; through crowdsourcing, ordinary citizens are contributing financially to the establishment of new forms of online journalism on blogs, websites and YouTube channels.

While journalism on the internet is criticised for being more overtly partisan than traditional media organisations, the internet provides space for multiple alternative views and, importantly, the facility to provide transparency through hyperlinks. The consumer is now an active participant and determining how well they are informed. Consequently, they have responsibility to inform themselves as active participants within the new notion of the Fourth Estate. The future of the Fourth Estate, while not mapped out in any neat plan, looks bright for both the scandal popular infotainment, entertainment, celebrity gossip journalism and also the serious right-to-know Fourth Estate journalism.

We have seen the *Guardian* adopt the challenges of the digital age and begin to flourish in the digital space, even though it is still to find a perfect business model. In the first decade of the 21st century, the *Guardian* has been a pioneer in online media: it first launched a mobile app in 2009 and was the first publisher to launch a news service on Google Glass. It has a formidable digital studio in which it tests new products on readers (O'Reilly & Edwards 2014) and in terms of its Fourth Estate role we have seen how the newspaper pursued the *News of the World* and how its unrivalled and formidable coverage of the Edward Snowden NSA leaks resulted in a Pulitzer Prize in 2014 (O'Reilly & Edwards 2014).

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Within the first decade of the 21st century we have seen journalism at its lowest, with the revelations of phone hacking and corruption in the UK. We have seen the antithesis of Fourth Estate journalism at *News of the World* and other newspapers. We have seen journalists bribe police officers and politicians,

and allegations that Rupert Murdoch has cultivated British prime ministers and the top echelons of society since the 1980s to enable his papers to practise journalism in unethical and illegal ways. This all speaks to a fundamental failure of this section of the press under the notion of the Fourth Estate.

We have also seen social media and celebrity news, gossip, lifestyle stories, reality television, YouTube, BuzzFeed, etc. distract us from hard news. But we have also seen during this time examples of the serious media—for example, the *Guardian*, Channel 4 and the *New York Times*—all fulfilling the ideal role of Fourth Estate journalism. We have seen how Nick Davies's reports at the *Guardian* kept the phone-hacking scandal in the public spotlight and forced parliament and other authorities to investigate allegations of wrongdoing. There is some irony in that it was the meticulous investigations by journalists of journalists, editors and media proprietors that provided us with a clear example of both the failure and the success of the Fourth Estate.

And all of this was happening at a time when the business model for journalism was collapsing—the same moment when newsrooms were closing down and many journalists were losing their jobs, as revenue for funding journalism dried up as audiences migrated to the online world. Journalists were also proactive in retraining to be able to multi-task and produce content across multiple digital platforms; and we have seen examples of the success of **citizen journalists**, J-bloggers and new forms of collaborative journalism starting to flourish in the online space.

At the same time as we saw the press exposed for its fundamental failures to uphold those ideals of the Fourth Estate, we saw the rise of WikiLeaks in 2006 and the new possibilities for accountability in journalism in the digital space. We have seen this whistleblower site transform from a data provider (a source of journalism) to a practiser of journalism. We saw its founder Julian Assange title himself as 'Editor in Chief' as he partnered with some of the world's most prestigious newspapers (including *The Sydney Morning Herald*) to create news stories based on leaked documents relating to the war in Afghanistan; the war in Iraq and leaked American diplomatic cables.

When Assange stumbled in his relationships with those around him, at the same time as he was being pursued by governments wanting to shut down his operation, the work of WikiLeaks diminished, but not its influence. We have seen some of the world's most influential news organisations adopt WikiLeaks practices, particularly by providing anonymous drop boxes for whistleblowers, reformulating the way journalism is practised.

CONCLUSION

One thing is certain in this uncertain world—journalism will survive. The Fourth Estate is not a paper-based institution; it is a notion, an ideal of what journalism should be in a free and open society. Speaking in Canberra in 2014, Tasmanian Senator Lisa Singh said:

In a democratic society, journalism is not a crime. Journalism is a necessity. In this country, courageous journalism improves our democracy by enabling public participation in decision-making. Australian and global citizens cannot exercise their right to vote effectively, if they have that right, or take part in public decision making, if they have that opportunity, unless they have free access to information and ideas about difficult and challenging issues, as reported by journalists. (Sing 2014)

citizen journalist:
member of the public
who acts in the role of a
journalist by gathering
news and new information
(including images) that
is communicated to an
audience.

How this quality, watchdog journalism will look in the decades to come, and who will finance it and who will practise it, is all uncertain. It does not need media barons or newsprint to operate, but it does need citizens committed to the notion of a free press and the Fourth Estate—as Henry Fielding envisaged it more than 250 years ago. In the 1770s it took this radical journalist and newspaper publisher, John Wilkes, to bring about a free press; in the 21st century it has taken another radical, Julian Assange, to remind us of what is possible in the digital age, but ultimately through the spectacular exposure of the presses failures in recent years we have all become more aware of the importance of a critical, civic watchdog media. But as English philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead reminds us: 'Ideas won't keep. Something must be done about them.' What the Fourth Estate is in this new century of change will be up to us all to determine, whether we be citizens, audiences, media proprietors or journalists.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The Fourth Estate is an idea and an ideal of what the news media should be like.
- The Fourth Estate was born out of the British government's attempt to suppress criticism in the 1700s.
- The propaganda model argues that the Fourth Estate works to reinforce and sustain capitalist institutions.
- The *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal brought the failure of the Fourth Estate and journalism into sharp focus. It also demonstrated how 'serious' the news media are prepared to interrogate journalism practice.
- WikiLeaks provided a new model for the practice of watchdog journalism in the global internet age.
- Collaborative journalism is emerging as a new model for journalism in the 21st century.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do you think Alan Rusbridger at the *Guardian* newspaper held back on information about the phone-hacking scandal?
- 2 Is the satirical magazine *Private Eye* part of the Fourth Estate?
- 3 Why was the revelation about journalists hacking the phone of murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler a catalyst in the case?
- 4 Is Stephen Stockwell correct when he argues that the news media is failing, and that reality television shows and amateur footage of news events are far more affecting than traditional journalism?
- 5 Eric Beecher argues that quality journalism is under threat as newspapers and analogue media collapse with the rise of the internet. He says there is an urgent need for responsible news reporting, but how can 'serious' journalism be delivered to society without an effective business model?

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4

THE DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

JASON BAINBRIDGE, CAROLYN BEASLEY AND LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

The many natural and human-induced disasters and dramas of recent years now automatically feature an avalanche of social media. Imagining major public events without Twitter, Facebook

and Instagram is actually becoming difficult, although these things are still so new. Think of the Lindt cafe siege in Sydney in December 2014, or Cyclone Marcia that hit central Queensland in February 2015. While **mainstream media (MSM)** were there in droves, much of what we saw, heard and read came from the immediate first-hand accounts of people on the scene, using their smartphones and tablets to flood the social media spaces with material eagerly consumed by a hungry and switched-on audience. 'Trending' (that is, to become the subject of many posts online within a comparatively short period of time) has become something not only desirable and but also keenly followed by individuals and institutions around the globe.

Paul Saffo of the Institute for the Future (Kluth 2006) described the information revolution as a 'Cambrian explosion' of technology-driven creativity, echoing the huge biological

#Mainstream media (MSM): Established mainstream television and radio stations and large established newspapers.

proliferation on Earth hundreds of millions of years ago. A decade on, that proliferation is showing no signs of slowing down.

One area that is continually changing, updating and rebooting itself is the media. The new mechanisms that these changes are producing have previously been referred to collectively as 'new media', but as they have become such an integral part of our lives, they are increasingly being referred to as digital and social media.

Some would argue that digital and social media have democratised and invigorated the media; others that they have sent them into a downward spiral. Whatever you think, change is inevitable, particularly as technology burgeons. Just as the invention of the transistor in the late 1940s was the start of the (then unimaginable) computer revolution, so we are now inventing technologies that will take us to who knows where. As information is one of the most important commodities in the world, the rise of information-based technology has transformed the way we receive and process information. Boundaries of all kinds are being blurred, and if we thought we could see the future a generation ago, we certainly cannot see it now.

Throughout this book we make reference to the ways digital and social media have disrupted traditional media industries and ideas, from the possibility of an online **Fifth Estate** to the effects of downloading on television. While we all think we know what is meant by the digital and social media environment, in this chapter we define what it means to be one of these media forms and why it is important. We also provide some suggestions for future directions and, in the context of journalism more specifically, examine how the shift in most traditional newsrooms to part online operation has profoundly changed news.

In this chapter we look at:

- the digital and social media environment
- specific examples of digital and social media
- online journalism and the switched-on newsroom
- computer-assisted reporting
- the consequences of the rise of digital and social media for old media.

WHAT IS THE DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA ENVIRONMENT?

As the name implies the digital and social media environment comprises information and entertainment transmitted digitally. This definition is almost the same as our definition of media that opened this book. The difference is in the addition of the word 'digital'. We use digital as the point of demarcation because, strictly speaking, not only are these no longer new media, but *all* media are new media. As John Hartley (2002a: 164) notes, 'The first new media technology we know about was writing, invented about 3100 BC in Egypt and Sumeria, and separately in China around the same time.' All media are new for the era that spawned them; media are constantly developing with advances in technology.

Fifth Estate: The new media technologies, such as the internet, as modes of news delivery; originally applied to radio and television.

The term ‘new media’ was most often used as a catch-all term to differentiate between old media (such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television) and new media, which are based on digitalisation (such as mobile phones, DVDs, gaming systems and the internet). As they have been around for so long—and are so integral in almost all that we do—we have increasingly referred to them as **digital media** rather than new media. Mobile phones and social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook also can be referred to as social media because they encourage audiences to be socially engaged, establishing the type of audience networks discussed in Chapter 10. Most recently we could add apps to this list. An app is an application software for computers (and more often smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices). Apps can include games (such as *Angry Birds*), be linked to social networking or currency sites (such as Grindr or Paypal), connect to email, stock market and weather information, be involved in geolocating or be one of a multitude of other variations.

These audience networks so profoundly challenge the old broadcasting models and the way that we communicate that it would be wrong to consider them just a fad; for example, social networking site Facebook has 890 million active daily users (Facebook statistics directory). Apps have become part of everyday life.

Understanding the digital and social media environment is not just a matter of listing all the new gadgets, widgets and online communities that are being introduced. According to media theorist Terry Flew, we have to understand all of these things in terms of ‘how they are actually altering our society’. This is because digital media and social media are doing something very important: they are ‘promoting a culture based upon interactivity and virtuality’ (Flew 2002: 207). This is the essence of the changing media environment. Digital and social media is about ‘immediacy’, and that simple fact has implications for the content and indeed the ethics of mass communication. Waiting until the newspaper hits the driveway in the morning or the television news runs its regular nightly bulletin is no longer acceptable to most people. Media consumers can specifically tailor and calibrate the media they receive to their precise specifications by mixing and matching from the smorgasbord of news, gossip and cat videos that they can tap into.

#Digital media: The mechanisms for digitally transmitting information and entertainment.

HOW HAS DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY CHANGED NEWS PRODUCTION?

There are several ways in which established newspapers have altered the structure and form of their stories for online broadcast. First, they tend to place less importance on the ‘when’ of a story, with the lead omitting any reference to the time or day that the event took place. Rather, this information tends to appear in the second paragraph or later, which could be seen as a way of making the story seem more current, as if it has happened only moments ago. This sense of currency means the story can be used across a number of updates and over a period of time.

Second, specific details about the ‘who, what and where’ of the lead—such as names and places—that used to be held back to the second paragraph are now used in the headline as a way of ensuring that the story is picked up during a Google metasearch. Headlines are written with search engines in mind (Lohr 2006). Some publications also now include dot-point summaries after the second paragraph as a way of keeping the reader’s attention after the lead.



Third, research shows that when journalists tweet during a crisis, their writing style becomes less objective and more opinionated. They are more likely to offer informed judgments about what they are witnessing rather than strict observation, as would be customary under the traditional model of news reporting (Revers 2014).

Fourth, many breaking news reports are now also geocoded, which lets specific smartphone apps match your current location with news events occurring nearby and send push notifications to your device (Weiss 2013). These can range from redirected tweets that warn you about an upcoming traffic blockage to a local sighting of Arnold Schwarzenegger. For a journalist, keeping an eye on a range of local alerts can lead straight to an unfolding story. This also has implications for who produces news, as the citizen journalist on the move has as much chance of catching the story as a traditional newsroom.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY?

Digital technology: The transmission of electronic information using binary code to store and transmit data; replaces analogue technology.

Analogue technology: The transmission and storage of electronic information via continuous waves, especially in recordings and radio signals, and along telephone wires.

Digital technology is distinct from analogue technology. Analogue (which means ‘analogous to the original’ or ‘continuous’) signals are transmitted as continuous waves, whereas digital information is transmitted as binary code that has to be converted by the receiving equipment. This code consists of bits (binary digits) of information, arranged in ones and zeros that represent two states: on and off. This arrangement of ones and zeros determines how that material will subsequently be decoded and put back together. Whereas analogue transmissions can be subject to interference (interruptions from competing signals) and degrade with excessive copying, digital information is received well or not at all (either on or off), and can be infinitely replicated without degradation. This has the positive result of enabling interactivity (see below), but its negative result is that it makes near-exact copying (piracy) very easy.

Digital technology is also compressible. Therefore:

- *its ability to compress information is dense:* vast amounts of information can be digitalised and stored in a small space, such as on a single CD, USB stick or network server
- *it is manipulable:* it can be reshaped constantly, from creation through to delivery and usage, which allows for interactivity and the audiences’ ability to shape content
- *it is impartial:* it is indifferent to ideas of representation, ownership, creation or usage, and is accessible to most forms of hardware
- *it is networkable:* content can be distributed to numerous audiences at once.

Understanding digitalisation is important to understanding why digital media are important. Because digital media are digitised, they have radically changed the mediasphere. Digitalisation allows for:

- content to be distributed across multiple delivery platforms (see Chapter 17)
- content to be distributed at a much faster rate
- content to be made interactive
- content from different platforms to be included in a single news report
- consumers to be provided with the tools of media production, blurring the lines between media production and consumption.

THE CHALLENGES POSED BY DIGITALISATION

The digitalisation of data means larger amounts of information than ever before can be stored, managed and analysed. Mobile phone network and internet providers, for example, collect what is known as metadata; that is, information such as the identities of subscribers and the dates and times of access. This collation of 'big data' has created a demand for a new set of journalistic skills and a new job description: the data journalist. Data journalists need to be specialists not only in working with enormous volumes of information, but also in understanding what changes these suggest and how these affect the public. Data journalism is easily understood when we remember that WikiLeaks was one of its first examples. The WikiLeaks database hosted millions of pieces of information and statistics that needed to be grouped, mapped and analysed in order to find the stories the data was telling.

But of course journalists are not the only ones analysing big data. Many governments see access to metadata as important for national security monitoring, and in 2015 the Australian government passed a law requiring all telcos to keep metadata for two years and to enable police to access it with a warrant. This poses a problem for journalists as they may not be able to protect the identities of sources and whistleblowers who risk their lives and livelihood to expose wrongdoing. After much debate about the potential damage to democracy and privacy that these changes may cause, the Federal Government amended the laws to include a clause protecting public interest advocates. These laws, and the challenge of maintaining confidentiality, however, may still alter at any time.

CLOUDS

Cloud storage is one of the ways in which data can be stored. Here, digital data is stored across several servers (and locations) managed by a hosting company. One of the best known is Apple's iCloud, which backs up and coordinates information taken on Apple products including contacts, iTunes (music) and photos. The security flaws in this system were very publicly revealed in 2014 when it was hacked and 100 celebrities had their naked selfies distributed online. YOLO—but with cloud storage it just may always be out there to see.

#Cloud: An internet-based system through which personal information is transmitted, processed and stored, and over which the individual has little knowledge, involvement or control.

THE INTERNET

A product of the Cold War and the USA's desire to keep pace with the Soviet Union (following its launch of the Sputnik satellite in 1957), the internet began life in 1969 as APRANET, a decentralised computer network designed by the American Department of Defense's Advanced Projects Research Agency (DAPRA), later to become APRA. APRANET provided a nuclear war contingency that would enable information to continue to exist and to be exchanged outside a central location if all central defence locations were destroyed.

THE FIRST EMAIL AND MAILING LIST

The first email program was developed in 1975. The first mailing list, the MsgGroup, followed shortly afterwards. On 12 April 1975, Kevin McKenzie emailed the group with the suggestion that symbols (emoticons) be used in emails to indicate emotion; for example, the emoticon :) would indicate a smile. It was the beginning of a new language for emails, one based very much on the principles of semiotics, signs and signifiers (discussed in Chapter 9), and similar to the texting conventions and *emojis* that have been taken up by mobile phone users. Each media form, it seems, develops its own vocabularies, often in their infancy.

The internet (or net) developed throughout the decades, thanks to the ongoing interest of military scientific research, which often relied on civilian scientists communicating between university campuses, and state funding. In the 1970s, a number of state-funded computer networks started appearing. They became compatible because of a 1985 decision by the National Science Foundation Network (NSFNET) to make the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) mandatory. Between 1981 and 1989, with this infrastructure in place and the ongoing collaboration of universities and private research bodies, the number of computers linked to the internet rose from 300 to just over 90,000. Subsequent developments of USENET (which enabled students at Duke University to network computers over a telephone line) and NSFNET (which linked five university computing centres) meant that when APRANET was decommissioned in 1995, TCP/IP became the infrastructure of the internet as we know it today, enabling global communication.

In 1989, the internet moved one step closer to the modern idea of the **World Wide Web**, the digital system that potentially links every computer in the world with every other computer, thanks to the development of a protocol based on **hypertext**: the embedding of links to one text inside another. This replicates the dialogic relationship (see Chapter 1) between texts that we call the mediasphere, and helps to develop those audience networks that have come to displace traditional broadcasting networks (as discussed in Chapter 10). Users no longer need to be culturally competent to recognise the intertexts, when a simple finger click will take one user straight to another.

The final step was the development of a **web browser**, a mechanism by which every computer user can navigate the World Wide Web. This began with the development of Marc Andreessen's Mosaic browser in 1992.

The central feature of the World Wide Web in the 1990s was the lack of control by any one company of the whole, but the issue soon arose of whether it could remain a public resource. During the 1990s, Microsoft emerged as the major supplier of software for all the world's computers, and made various attempts to take control of people's access to the web. From 2000, vast new companies, such as Google, Yahoo and Amazon, began to rival Microsoft's power. These companies, in turn, have been accused of attempting to take control of the world's electronic knowledge through their control of internet **portals**, the entry points to the web from which users gain access to news websites, **search engines**, email, social media and databases. Thus far, it has been difficult for even the most litigious of organisations—or even the most ambitious of lawmakers—to maintain any degree of control over what appears online.

World Wide Web: The digital system that potentially links every computer in the world with every other computer; first named as such in 1991.

Hypertext: The embedding of links to one internet text from another.

Web browser: The mechanism by which every computer user can navigate the Net.

Portal: An entry point to the World Wide Web, from which a user gains access to news websites, search engines, email pages and databases.

Search engine: A system searching and analysing the content of non-hidden websites, analysing the relationship between websites and linking sites on the basis of links from other highly relevant sites; the most famous search engine is Google.

Neuromancer

William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* (1984) gave us the term **cyberspace** to describe the way in which computer users can inhabit a new kind of mental space, within and between computers. Gibson refers to this space as a 'consensual hallucination'.



#Cyberspace: The notional realm in which electronic information exists or is exchanged; the imagined world of virtual reality.

Google

The enormous growth of the World Wide Web posed a major problem: how could any individual user find the internet address of any other user who had some desired piece of information? This problem was solved by the invention of the search engine, of which the foremost example is Google.

Google works by searching and analysing the content of all non-hidden websites, analysing the relationship between websites and ranking sites on the basis of links from other highly relevant sites. Google has become the premier internet search engine and one of the largest online advertisers. Google is so well known that the name has become a verb (to google) for searching the net, and a metaphor for research more generally ('I'll just google it'). The name comes from a misspelling of 'googol', referring to the number 10 to the power of 100. Since 2000, Google has also sold advertisements associated with search keywords. More recent innovations have included Google News, Google Maps, Google+ social networking, Chromecast (for streaming films and television series from broadcasters such as HBO, Netflix and YouTube) and Google Scholar (indexing scholarly journals and articles), with the aim of making the internet world a Google world. This plan is well under way, with acquisitions of more than one company a week since 2010, including YouTube (Farnham 2014). Google searches can also drive news coverage, with journalists creating content to match what search engine analytics report as the top trending topics (Ragas & Tran 2013). This process is known as 'reverse agenda setting'.



The Intersect and the Machine

The mid 2000s comedy/spy series *Chuck* is based around a piece of (fictional) technology called the Intersect, a type of cloud storage system that can be implanted into a person and houses an enormous amount of encoded data (basically the equivalent of a clouding service for the internet with its own search engine downloaded directly into your brain). The Intersect very much functions as a metaphor for the government's current relationship with the internet and metadata; developed by a combination of US government agencies sharing their secrets on the



program, it speaks to governmental desires to have access to personal information at all times as well as a larger cultural myth about technology—that there are patterns a sophisticated algorithm could uncover and therefore identify threats more quickly.

Commencing in 2011, the series *Person of Interest* was based around a similar piece of technology, the Machine, that could predict violent acts via mass surveillance. Like *Chuck*, it was predicated on this myth of a sophisticated algorithm identifying threats—but here it was before they even occurred.

The world goes online, followed by journalism

Today, over three billion people regularly use the internet (Internet Live Stats n.d.), nearly half the population of the world. This is a huge increase even since the second edition of this textbook, when global usage was around 2.2 billion. Worldwide use of the internet is growing so quickly that any listing of statistics is almost immediately out of date. Asia has by far the most users, with close to 50 per cent of the global total, and it is estimated that by 2020 Chinese will be the most common internet language (which is reflected in the television science fiction series *Firefly*, in which the world's most spoken language is an amalgamation of English and Chinese). Europe and North America come in second and third in numbers of internet users, with a fast-growing internet population in Africa not far behind. **Broadband** access long ago outstripped **dial-up** access. Broadband has made many forms of online interactivity possible, such as uploading videos or taking part in **metaverses**. It has brought more potential for connecting to a wider world, or, more accurately, to a larger range of small, specialised worlds; what some theorists have referred to as public sphericules (see Chapter 1).

The sheer numbers of people with online access was noticed, a little belatedly, by the mainstream media. In September 2006, by which time around 1.5 billion people around the world had access to the internet, four major News Limited daily papers—the *Daily Telegraph* in Sydney, the *Herald Sun* in Melbourne, the *Courier-Mail* in Brisbane and the *Adelaide Advertiser*—announced that they were becoming twenty-four-hour operations, with their newsrooms operating continuously to ensure regular online updates on stories (Australian Press Council 2006). This brought News Limited into line with the two major Fairfax outlets, the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Age*, which had gone to a nonstop newsroom about eighteen months earlier.

LIVE BLOGGING

When Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down over war-torn territory in Ukraine, with 38 Australian citizens and residents on board, we were kept updated on the attempted recovery, investigation and conjecture about what happened through a complex ongoing mashup of digital sources. These included live television crosses to Ukraine, Australian expert commentary, amateur videos from locals hosted on YouTube, selfies from Russian soldiers standing next to wreckage, translated witness testimonies, and breaking news through traditional and social media like Twitter. Many online news publications gathered these cross-platform snippets and hosted them on a single site within their organisation. These pages are known as live blogs.

Broadband: Currently, the most advanced form of internet access, offering high-speed access and wide bandwidth; transmitted via telephone, cable and wireless services, which has almost entirely replaced dial-up.

Dial-up: The earliest form of access to the internet, using slow signals sent through a telephone wire.

Metaverse: A fictional, virtual world.



From their humble beginnings as minute-by-minute sports updates, live blogs have become one of the most effective ways for news organisations and audiences to monitor crisis events. Live blogs work on a principle of curatorship in that information is drawn from a broader and more transparent range of primary and secondary sources than traditional reports and is presented through a single online space (Thurman & Walters 2013). They have been defined as ‘a single blog post on a specific topic to which time-stamped content is progressively added for a finite period—anywhere between half an hour and 24 hours’ (Thurman & Walters 2013: 83). They tend to have frequent, short updates, be authored by multiple journalists in many locations, and quote widely from, and link to, external sources (Thurman & Rodgers 2014). Different outlets have different degrees of public or crowdsourcing participation. Their role in the future of journalism seems firmly set, with readers spending more time reading the site than other multimedia forms like video and photo galleries, and with up to a one-third of widespread international readers in a 2013 poll believing live blogs were more balanced than traditional media reports (Thurman & Newman 2014).

The twenty-four-hour news cycle

The twenty-four-hour news cycle has become a daily reality for many journalists, particularly those in metropolitan newspapers or on mainstream electronic media. News on the web is updated regularly, and constantly changes. The words are invariably accompanied by digital photographs, audio grabs or video footage, sometimes from citizen journalists and sometimes from journalists who are now expected to write a print story and produce electronic material for the website as well. Reporters rarely just write news any more. They are expected not only to provide visuals of many kinds, but also to use their Twitter accounts to spread their stories beyond the traditional means of dissemination and interact with media consumers.

Similarly, television networks have been quick to ally themselves with online sites. In Australia, Channel Seven has formed a connection with Yahoo! to create Yahoo!7, while Channel Nine has followed US network NBC’s lead in connecting with Microsoft to form ninemsn. The ABC has an enormous online presence, which features iView, accessible archived episodes of some of their series, podcasts, vodcasts and transcripts from its television and radio programs. Increasingly, these sites are not only advertisements and portals to other television sites, but also produce their own exclusive content that provides clues and gossip about ongoing series, as well as behind-the-scenes information and catch-up episodes of certain programs. These alliances seem to be in anticipation of **Internet Protocol Television (IPTV)**: essentially, television content on demand, of which YouTube, Netflix and FetchTV are some of the best-known examples.

#Internet Protocol Television (IPTV):

Television content on demand through the internet; YouTube is currently the best-known example.

YouTube

YouTube, founded by several former employees of ebusiness PayPal, is a video-sharing website where users can upload, distribute, create, share, comment on and view videos; most users are individuals but media corporations are increasingly posting their own content, too.



#**YouTube**: A user-created online video bank.

YouTube has evolved beyond its original aims to become a central part of the public sphere, an archive of pop culture moments and a shorthand way of becoming a celebrity. In 2006, it was acquired by Google for US\$1.65 billion. At this time, according to a July 2006 survey and the Nielsen/Net ratings, close to 100 million video clips were being viewed daily, 20 million viewers logged on per month and an additional 65,000 videos were being uploaded every 24 hours. By 2015, YouTube boasted one billion users, 81.5 per cent of whom were aged between 14 and 17 years. Three hundred hours of video were being uploaded per minute, and four billion people viewed videos on YouTube daily, with the average person spending 15 minutes of their day on the site. These views are four times the amount of the prime-time audience of all three major US television broadcast networks combined. Importantly, 70 per cent of those viewers and users came from outside the USA.

The significance of YouTube was confirmed by *Time* magazine's cover featuring a silver foil monitor that proclaimed 'You' as the 2006 Person of the Year; the cover was specifically referring to user-created media on sites such as YouTube and in many ways foreshadows the prospective move towards Media 3.0. However, the most important ability YouTube has is to throw an event, issue or person into the public eye within hours. See, for example, how YouTube was used as a platform for US citizens to quiz the Democrat nominees in the lead-up to the 2008 presidential election. Similarly, in 2010 YouTube streamed a live interview with President Obama and in 2014 it encouraged people in 153 countries to engage in the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge.

This ability to create and disseminate the hot topic of the day, or even multiple topics, marks YouTube as a natural source of news. It functions as a free and democratic view into what is galvanising the public at any time. As well as using YouTube as an eye and ear on what the buzz topics are in their world, journalists can add to the narratives surrounding this buzz and bring these issues into the purview of mainstream culture, often creating YouTube celebrities along the way.

'Leave Britney Alone': YouTube celebrities

As noted in Chapter 11, YouTube is becoming an increasingly important part of celebrity culture. YouTube celebrities who have attracted publicity through their videos include Smosh, lonelygirl14 (the New Zealand actress Jessica Rose) and the 'Star Wars kid' (a 14-year-old boy recorded acting out Darth Maul moves). The 'kid' has been viewed over 900 million times, and, while not originating on YouTube, currently resides there as the basis of a number of **mashups**. Some YouTube celebrities have used YouTube (some would say successfully, some not) as a way to become offline celebrities, among them Brooke Brodack (Brookers), Lisa Donovan (LisaNova), Chris Crocker (who tearfully defended Britney Spears after her 2007 MTV Music Awards performance) and, most famously, Justin Bieber.

YouTube also assists celebrities in promoting themselves. Classic examples include the YouTube posting of OK Go's treadmill video for 'Here it Goes Again', Susan Boyle's first extraordinary performance on *Britain's Got Talent*, which exposed her to a global audience that may have never otherwise seen her on the program, and Sick Puppies, who garnered international attention when their music accompanied the YouTube video of the Free Hugs Campaign. All of these examples can still be sourced from YouTube.

#Mashup: A website or application that combines content from more than one source into an integrated experience.

Alternative models of newsgathering in the new media environment



As part of the larger shift towards audience networks, digitisation has enabled alternative community media to evolve, along with opportunities for audiences to pay to help journalists investigate and write about stories that mainstream media overlook. Under this model, if a news outlet buys the story, donations made to help get the story off the ground are reimbursed. For more information, see www.propublica.org/about. Other sites that follow this or a similar model include:

- the Centre for Investigative Reporting (<http://cironline.org/about>)
- the Centre for Public Integrity (www.publicintegrity.org/about)
- the Australian-based Public Interest Journalism Foundation (www.pijf.com.au).

But are not-for-profit and indie journalism outlets as good for us as we think they are? See www.slate.com/id/2231009/pagenum/all/#p2 for a discussion on the downside of nonprofit journalism, and www.media-alliance.org/article.php?id=1846 for some wise words about ethical conduct for community media.

The cautionary tale of Meerkat



Meerkat is a live streaming app that piggybacks onto Twitter, allowing you to live stream whatever is occurring via your Twitter account to all of your followers. Hailed as a revolutionary tool (particularly for journalists), Meerkat's success was remarkably short-lived as Twitter cut off Meerkat's access to their social graph and launched their own app—Periscope—which provided the same functionality of live streaming to Twitter followers plus the option of letting anyone play the stream back. Periscope was instantly hailed as a great tool for journalists. It's a dog eat dog world when it comes to app creation—or should that be dog eat meerkat?

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

The internet also assists in community building through the creation of social media; that is, **social networking sites** such as Facebook, Twitter and Flickr (as well as dating apps such as Grindr and Tinder). These media were originally designed for social interaction, featuring accessible and easily changeable layouts and designs, but they have morphed into myriad personalised channels for sending and receiving all kinds of news and professional information, not just personal news. Here, individuals become 'nodes' in a network connected by friendships, common interests, sexual relationships, prestige and, increasingly, a desire to find out breaking news and analysis quickly and easily.

#Social networking site:

A social structure composed of individuals and/or organisations that become 'nodes' connected to each other through multiple interdependencies such as friendships, common interests, sexual relationships, prestige and any other number of emotions and concerns.

Chatroom: A site on a computer network where online conversations are held in real time by a number of users.

All of these social networking sites and apps are essentially evolutions of internet **chatrooms**, where users can communicate with each other via a series of short messages. Today, communication is enhanced by visuals, music or anything else the user chooses to put up on a page. They are miniature archives of how a person chooses to represent themselves in the public sphere. The economic value of such sites was first realised in 2005 when News Corp acquired MySpace for US\$576 million and British television company ITV acquired Friends Reunited (see Nightingale 2007).



Snapchat

A photo messaging app that has a time limit in which the image can be retained (one to ten seconds, though it can be captured through a screenshot), Snapchat is a great example of how digital media can alter communication practice. Here networks are maintained through nonverbal communication like the sending of funny faces, locations, food, pieces of street art and sexting (photos with sexual content), with the visual replacing the written.



SOCIAL MEDIA AND JOURNALISM

Social media, or online sites and tools that encourage social networking (Lariscy et al. 2009) and the dissemination of information through social interaction, have also had an impact on the way news is collected and presented to the public.

As Lariscy and colleagues make clear (2009), journalists may regularly visit blogs, chatrooms, Facebook and Twitter for story ideas, sources and information updates. SBS *Insight* producer Elise Potaka followed social media updates from radical Australian teenager Jake Bilardi for months, and used these to interview him via direct message for a story on young jihadists before he died in a suspected suicide attack in Iraq in 2015. Some journalists also use these forums to check facts and check the veracity of rumours. Interestingly, the larger a publication, the more likely its journalists are to consult social media sites as a source of verification and information. Social media are also widely used by businesses as a type of media release, enabling companies and organisations to attempt to influence the issues that are reported on and given attention in the media, making them a prime news source for journalists (Lariscy et al. 2009).

But social media are not just for journalists wanting a story; they can also be used to get a story to the widest possible audience. Social media have the ability to disseminate a range and rate of information in sometimes startling ways. Bursts of gunfire from a US helicopter in Bagdad in 2007 killed a dozen people in the streets, including two Reuters journalists. Reuters spent three years attempting to find out the circumstances of the deaths, using Freedom of Information Acts and government pressure. On 6 April 2010, the WikiLeaks site released a video of the shooting. Within thirty-six hours, 2.5 million people had seen it (Greenwald 2010). This was the start of the whole WikiLeaks phenomenon discussed in Chapter 3, and an important reminder of how such sites are altering ways in which we think about what journalism can be.

Social media is also one of the fastest-growing ways that we consume news. Up to 30 per cent of Americans get their news from Facebook and 10 per cent from YouTube, with numbers growing daily (Anderson & Caumont 2014). All aspiring journalists should already be blogging and using Twitter.

Carolyn Beasley

SOCIAL MEDIA IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Whenever the Australian coastline is bombarded by a tropical cyclone, many people in the firing line have adopted the habit of establishing or renewing their connections with the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts that provide the best and most up-to-date information. Social media have become essential for spreading useful information and comforting those who face these unstoppable natural events. However, the regular use of social media for this purpose is fairly recent. For example, the first widespread use of social media in North Queensland occurred in 2011, when the biggest cyclone ever to hit Queensland, Severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi, approached and then crossed the coast. It was a terrifying time for people all along the north coast of the state. Satellite images showed a gigantic cyclonic system moving with awful inexorability towards several large population centres, including Townsville. On the morning of 2 February, the cyclone was upgraded to Category 5, the highest measure of cyclonic power.

For the first time, the Townsville City Council took the decision to include the social networking sites Facebook and Twitter in its disaster management communication plan. Regular updates in a calm and informative tone gave residents directly in the cyclone's path practical advice on what to do and a sense that they were not alone—far better than the more distant traditional news bulletins could do.

In 2015, Queensland was again menaced by major cyclones, particularly Severe Tropical Cyclone Marcia (another Category 5 event) that caused millions of dollars of damage, particularly to areas around Yeppoon and Rockhampton. Apart from the exchange of many kinds of information, social media also quickly disseminates visual imagery as cyclones travel along their destructive path. One site that accumulated Cyclone Marcia images may be found at www.news.com.au/national/take-a-look-inside-the-storm-as-residents-in-the-cyclone-zone-take-to-social-media/story-fncynjr2-1227228357500.

Liz Tynan

Twitter

Twitter has evolved from a tool mostly used to track the minute-by-minute activities of friends and celebrities to one with a wide variety of uses, including receiving real-time information about breaking news stories. It is essentially a micro-blogging tool that limits each entry to 140 characters. In 2015, Twitter reported 288 million monthly active users and 500 million tweets sent per day (Twitter 2015). The ability of Twitter users to communicate short messages immediately and to an open audience means it has also become an important tool of all forms of journalism, from citizen journalism right through to the slowly evolving MSM.

This shift from pure social networking to social alerts first became apparent when people who sent tweets were the first to tell the world about the terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008 and the Hudson River plane crash in New York in 2009. Recognising Twitter's power as a device for immediate updates or serialisations, major news organisations now allow their journalists to report on summits and events via Twitter. Now Twitter breaks news like no other media system. For example, the first reports of the terrorist attack at the office of the Paris-based magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in January 2015 came from Twitter. The drama played out over several days, with the story 'trending' throughout.

Why is Twitter so useful for journalists?

Twitter's instantaneousness is one of its key allures. It provides instant updates on news and events straight to the mobile phones, email inboxes and websites of subscribers and readers. A journalist's message can reach its audience within seconds of being sent, and can be updated without limit. A second important aspect is that Twitter enables a journalist to build a highly personal and/or highly public (and certainly intensely interactive) relationship with their readers (Ahmad 2010). Having received a tweet, the audience can tweet back directly to the journalist and the journalist can choose whether to have that response streamed to the newspaper's site or on the journalist's own blog.

This immediacy is also a boon for the print industry as it enables online editions to compete with radio and television news when it comes to presenting immediate and breaking news (Ahmad 2010).

Journalists can also use Twitter as a way of calling for information, sources and verifications. In a sense, it can be seen as a collaborative research tool. The *Guardian's* legal correspondent, Afua Hirsh, is renowned for using Twitter in this way and will present ideas, theories and questions in an effort to get feedback and direction when building stories (Ahmad 2010). This represents the purest form of the dialogic relationship between media texts and texts and audiences that we first raised in Chapter 1.

The upside of Twitter's news-breaking capacity is that readers are exposed to what may be uncensored and unmediated eyewitness accounts of events as they unfold in real time. The downside is that without the skills of journalistic practice, citizen journalists may not be able to contextualise, analyse or distance themselves from what they are seeing occur around them. It is in the hands of the citizen journalist, then, that Twitter becomes a way of communicating what it's like to be immersed in the immediacy of an event. As Ahmad (2010) notes, it is this gap that demonstrates the need for the trained journalist. While anyone can relay what they are seeing, the journalist is uniquely positioned to offer informed commentary, analysis, synthesis and collation. Recognising these challenges, new media outlets such as Storyful have emerged specifically to verify and supply social media content such as tweets and videos. Their fact-checking of material has included over 3000 items generated by citizen journalists about Syria since 2011. You can read how they work at <http://storyful.com/case-studies>. Twitter also serves the interest of the newspaper and its organisation by drawing people to the online site of the publication during times of crisis or emergency. Due to the immediacy of the tweets from the street-level reporter or citizen journalist,

and the ability of these to be streamed to a central site, Twitter is the fastest way to collate, spread and share information about a disaster or any other event (Lenatti 2009).

Newspapers use Twitter as a marketing device by sending tweets to followers announcing the headlines and links to articles that appeared in the printed and online editions of the paper that day. In these instances, Twitter is functioning as a supplement rather than challenge or substitute for the more traditional forms of journalism (Ahmad 2010).

There are, of course, some deeper theoretical issues that need to be explored when we think about how journalists might use Twitter. There's a high level of interest in the reporting by citizen journalists of elections and other events in developing nations because Twitter and other social media can offer an unmediated and uncensored eye into closed societies. However, we might want to think about whether these reports are indeed coming from the average uninvested observer on the street or whether only a certain type of citizen is able to participate in these types of electronic exchanges. To use Twitter and other social media, a person must have access to a mobile phone and internet connection, the technological skill to connect these two, and the financial means to be able to afford a network account. The type of citizen who can afford these is more likely to be middle class, of good means and have a degree of political and international awareness. In such a critique, we should also consider the degree to which the use of Twitter, and, indeed, any new technology, functions as a device of corporate information capitalism and a lure for consumerism (Ahmad 2010).

TWITTER IN THE PROFESSIONS

A mark of how Twitter has evolved as a communication medium may be seen in the way it is being used by professional groups such as scientists and medical professionals. Research conferences now regularly include the opportunity for live tweeting, sometimes to a screen on the stage where the presenters are speaking. This provides a running commentary on the proceedings and enables immediate feedback. Social media is also being used to inform professionals of research developments and other issues of importance to people in the field. A recent study of how live Twitter was used at a cardiac conference (Ferguson et al. 2014) highlighted 'the significance and place of social media within research dissemination and collaboration'. This is a genuine advancement in communication in fields that have in the past been conservative and often slow in their methods of the communication. According to the study authors, 'Twitter is increasingly being used during scientific conferences to allow for 'real-time' parallel conversations, dissemination, critique and open appraisal of studies, collaboration and professional networking.' That study recommended that researchers should consider using social media to ensure that their findings were communicated to relevant audiences quickly.

Another study that focused on nursing research and practice (Casella, Mills & Usher 2014) confirmed that social media is 'blurring the boundaries between the social and the technical thereby transforming human contact and communication into a multi-method process'. This study urged health care professionals to 'integrate social media into assessing, diagnosing, planning, implementing and evaluating care'.



MMPORGs

MMPORG: Massively multiplayer online role-playing games; a genre of gaming in which large numbers of players interact with each other in a virtual world.

Another form of social networking occurs in the massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMPORGs)—such as *World of Warcraft*, described in more detail below—which also enable players to talk and interact in real time in completely fictional virtual environments. All of this is happening in a virtual space, because the internet itself is virtual rather than tangible. The communities that gather there are therefore **virtual communities**; that is, their communication is achieved through technology rather than face-to-face interaction.



Who remembers *Second Life*?

An early example of MMPORGs is *Second Life*. In its heyday it boasted over nine million users, with one million still active in 2015. Residents design the way they look, choose their friends, set up businesses, buy and sell things, have sex and build houses, though not necessarily in that order. Increasingly, a number of real-world businesses set up sites in *Second Life*; Australia's ABC, for example, has a radio station based there. *Second Life*'s residents own all the intellectual property rights in the things they create, which created a burgeoning *Second Life* economy both inside the *Second Life* world itself (using the game's virtual currency, Linden dollars) and also on eBay (using US dollars pegged to the Linden exchange rate). The *Economist* (2006: 99) estimated that for an average month in 2006, ten million *Second Life* objects were created, and 230,000 were bought and sold. Check out the *Second Life* website for yourself at <http://secondlife.com>.

Virtual community: An online community where communication is achieved through technology rather than face-to-face interaction.

Virtual identity: A fictional identity invented by an online member of a virtual community.

Perhaps more significantly—as the internet has all of the capabilities afforded by digitalisation, including manipulability—the identities of the individuals that make up these virtual communities are similarly manipulable. They are **virtual identities**. Unlike the relative fixity of identities offline (through gender, sexuality, age and race, though it is conceded that these can all be challenged in various and sometimes surgical ways), a virtual identity enables a computer user to completely transcend materiality. An overweight 50-year-old man can become a petite young girl with pigtails. An overworked accountant can become a muscular barbarian. Virtual identities enable us to live out a number of lives, where how we look and what we do is only limited by our imaginations.

The negative is that virtual identities allow for the greater possibility of internet stalking, such as people in chatrooms purporting to be of a different age or gender, including paedophiles posing as children to talk online to other children. At the very least, the relative facelessness of virtual identities can result in practices that would not be undertaken in the real world, practices that the relative lack of online accountability seems to permit.

Avatar: An online construct that allows a member of a virtual community to transcend age, gender, race or geography, and make a new identity.

The extreme example of a virtual identity is the **avatar**, a digital character that is created online by the user. These can range from the female dwarves of *World of Warcraft* to an alien Jedi in *Star Wars: The Old Republic* or a Vulcan first officer in *Star Trek*. In 1992, Neal Stephenson's novel *Snow Crash* was one of a number of novels that helped to popularise the idea of an avatar living in a virtual world.

eBay

eBay primarily exists as a trading centre for online shoppers. Launched in 1995, eBay started as a place to trade collectables and hard-to-find items. Today, eBay is a global marketplace where businesses and individuals can buy and sell practically anything.

eBay also serves as a kind of cultural barometer by which we can measure the changing tastes of consumers and the importance they attach to cultural artefacts. It can also function as a type of research tool: as an archive of consumer tastes, as a way of exploring how desire for cultural products is generated (usually based around nostalgia) and as a way of circulating culture, continually reinvigorating cultural products by giving them currency.



eCommerce

Opportunities for online businesses (eCommerce) are based on two principles: disintermediation and reintermediation.

Traditionally, business transactions occur through a series of intermediaries. Products flow from manufacturers to wholesalers, then to distributors, then to retailers and on to consumers. The internet facilitates **disintermediation**: the removal of wholesalers, distributors and retailers (the middle men) from the intermediary processes, so manufacturers can deliver products directly to consumers. An example of this is a manufacturer's website that offers products for sale directly to a consumer. This removal of intermediaries, and their attendant fees and costs, enables manufacturers to keep a greater cut of the profit, while enabling the consumer to receive the product at a significantly reduced price.

But, as we have seen from the eBay example, the internet also allows for the possibility of **reintermediation**; that is, the reintroduction of an intermediary—in this case an electronic intermediary. This is a new business (or businesses) designed to link manufacturers to consumers. eBay is a classic example of reintermediation, especially where artists or customisers are selling their items through the website. Amazon is another. Reintermediation can also add value to products by offering extra material, in the form of extra content or promotional material, customised to the individual consumer.

#eCommerce: Business conducted online; internet-based, interactive, networked connections between producers, consumers and service providers.

#Disintermediation: The removal of wholesalers, distributors and retailers (the middle men) from the intermediary processes, so manufacturers can deliver products directly to consumers.

#Reintermediation: The reintroduction of a business intermediary, especially an electronic intermediary; a new business (or businesses) designed to link manufacturers to consumers.

HOW DO WEBSITES MAKE MONEY?

As we will see in our discussion of audiences (Chapter 10), specifically in the context of television (see Chapter 7), broadcast media obtain their revenue from the sale of audiences to advertisers. Online media face a more complicated situation. Advertising revenue is not simply based on how often an advertisement is seen, or the number of times users click through to the advertiser's home page, or even the volume of sales or sales prospects, but also on the length of time users spend on one site. This is because internet users generate commercially useful information every time they visit a website, and this information can be valuable regardless of whether they look at the advertising displayed. Therefore, online advertisers are really interested in sites that prompt a great deal of internet traffic, just as broadcast advertisers are interested in programs that attract large audiences or a certain type



of audience. However, this can also negatively impact on journalism; there are reported instances of editors rejecting stories because they don't appeal to online readers and therefore won't generate enough hits. For more information see Foremski (2010).

Pay per view for news

News Limited and the Fairfax stable of papers both have online news sites that require users to pay to read content. Some provide 'soft paywalls' that allow a limited number of free reading opportunities a month and others offer a mixed model where general news content remains free but more specific targeted information is subject to a paywall or payment per viewing. 'Hard paywalls' do not allow any free content at all. In Australia, most newspapers do not allow completely free reading of their online content. By contrast, free news content is provided by online startups or divisions such as Google, news.com.au, Gawker and BuzzFeed, or broadcasters such as abc.net.au/news.

This change has been fuelled by declining advertising revenues from their print editions. The shortfall has not been filled by online advertising revenue, which alone is not enough to finance newsrooms, despite Fairfax and News Limited's websites recording about 10 million users a month.

There is still great debate over whether pay per view or paywalls are the way forward for online news. Some suggestions that have been offered include the following:

- Paywalls work best with specific or niche articles and information, such as those offered by trade publications, insider news such as the politics beat, parliamentary updates, topic collections or celebrity stories. This is not a new conclusion as there are newsletters that do well by subscription. The trick will be to persuade the general newspaper reader that there is a niche for them.
- The best way forward for the average newspaper is a mix of paid and free content. Perhaps an article could be read for free for a month, but then it becomes payable. This is a model used by some publications, but it's easily circumvented due to URL archiving services such as the Way Back Machine (www.archive.org). Alternatively, some articles could be offered for free, but follow-up pieces would have to be paid for.
- Papers should position themselves as authorities on a particular area, and then people would pay more in the belief that the content is unique. For example, the *Washington Post* alone gives you the real insider news on Washington and politics. The concept here is to sell the idea of Washington, not local stories about Washington.
- Paywalls for online editions can increase hardcopy subscriptions if accessing online content is more expensive for readers than purchasing a print edition.
- News organisations should think about what changes need to be made to the conventions of the hard news lead. If readers are only able to access the first 30 words or so of an article for free, then the traditional 'who, what, why, when' model of introduction may lead to fewer purchases as readers will have already grasped the content of the article. Leads for paywalled articles may need an 'alluring delayed' rather than 'summary opening'.

Wikis

New media optimists point to a remarkable phenomenon that epitomises the democratic and unregulated nature of the internet: that of wikis. The first software to be called a wiki, WikiWikiWeb, was said to be named by an American programmer called Ward Cunningham, who remembered

Wiki: A server program that allows users to collaborate in forming the content of a website. Users edit the content of other users.

a Honolulu International Airport counter employee telling him to take the so-called Wiki Wiki shuttle bus line between the airport's terminals. According to Cunningham (2006), 'I chose wiki-wiki as an alliterative substitute for 'quick' and thereby avoided naming this stuff 'quick-web'. Wiki Wiki is a doubling up of 'wiki', a Hawaiian word for fast. The word is sometimes interpreted to be an acronym for 'What I Know Is', which describes its knowledge contribution, storage and exchange functions.

Wikis enable people using the internet to go into an online document and edit it or add new information. The best known example of this is **Wikipedia**, an online encyclopedia famously compiled by an army of online contributors, who regularly dispute and bicker over information. For all its potential for agendas and false information, it still does remarkably well to remain up to date and useful. This proves to many people's satisfaction that the self-regulatory nature of the internet does not allow egregious errors to stand for too long; someone will come along soon and fix it if the information is wrong.

#Wikipedia: An online encyclopedia that is continually edited and added to by its users.

SOME DISTURBING TRENDS

A disturbing and sinister new aspect of the internet was all too apparent in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq in 2003: its use to webcast the execution of hostages in Iraq, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and parts of North Africa. Both the immediacy and the nature of the content make this phenomenon unique: public executions that can be viewed by anyone with internet access. Many television news programs then showed at least the lead-ups to the beheadings, stopping short of the act itself. Even allowing for this restraint on the broadcast airwaves, surely this is a retrograde step, taking us back to the barbarity of public executions. During 2014, the terrorist organisation known as Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or various other acronyms took this trend even further with the highly stage-managed executions of journalists, aid workers and other captives. These terrible videos, usually featuring the victim kneeling in an orange jumpsuit in front of a murderer swathed in black, were made for the internet and quickly disseminated through it after each execution. MSM rarely shows these images any more, in an attempt to deprive ISIS of the oxygen of publicity. However, there are no such restraints on the internet.

THE ONLINE GAMING INDUSTRY

Ironically, given the attention that we will be lavishing on print, radio, film, television and public relations, it is the online gaming industry that (at the time of writing) is the single largest media industry in the world, making over US\$90 billion internationally, US\$2.5 billion of which comes from Australia. Game budgets are equivalent to those for feature films (for example, *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2* cost US\$50 million to develop and US\$200 million to market) and their sales far outstrip them. Currently, there are an estimated 142 million regular game players worldwide, making games much more than child's play.

The gaming industry is also culturally significant in that computer games remain the first mass media form not to have been invented in the West. They are of Japanese and Korean origin, the product of companies such as Nintendo, Sega and Sony.

Even the name of the industry has evolved as the industry has evolved. It has progressively shed the adjectives 'video' games or 'computer' games as the industry has continued to move beyond outdated analogue technologies. Utilising a variety of software and consoles, and played across a variety of media (from televisions to computer screens) in a variety of environments (domestically and in arcades), the gaming industry is perhaps the best equipped of all media industries to forge links with the latest technological developments and take advantage of the opportunities offered by convergence. Some writers, such as Lalor (2007), refer to game systems such as PlayStation and Xbox as providing an 'intravenous connection' to old media such as the television. Rather than being seen as extensions of traditional media, they are now propping up older media as distribution systems for their graphics and ideas. Their function as a convergent industry is considered in more detail in Chapter 19.

The earliest video game is 1972's *Pong*, and from there the graphics continued to develop through games such as *Space Invaders* and *Centipede*. It became a domestic media form with the Atari 2600 game system in 1977, and reached critical mass with *Pac-Man* in 1980. From there the industry continued to produce a range of iconic characters capable of moving between media forms, such as television series, comic books, cartoons and films, from the barrel-throwing monkey Donkey Kong, the Italian plumbers Mario and Luigi (and Mario's evil counterpart Wario), and the blue hedgehog Sonic, to the English archaeologist and adventurer Lara Croft (in the tiny, tiny shorts) and the grim and gleaming Master Chief of *Halo* fame. Rather than simply adapting other properties into games, the gaming industry itself has become a content provider.

Current estimates place the overall figure of digital immigrants at 800 million (based on registered members of online computer games). In Australia, Jeffrey Brand's study, *Interactive Australia 2007*, found that 79 per cent of Australia households had some form of computer game device. Furthermore, the average age of the Australian gamer was 28 (up from 24, two years earlier); in Europe and the USA it was 30 (Brand 2007). Gaming is certainly no longer just an adolescent pursuit.

ADAPTING GAMES

Properties such as *Resident Evil*, *Silent Hill*, *Doom* and *Super Mario Brothers* have all been adapted into films, with varying degrees of success. *Resident Evil* and *Halo* have also featured in toy lines, comic books and novels [see Chapter 19 for more on this].

World of Warcraft

Over 6.8 million people are registered inhabitants of the fantastical world of Azeroth. It is Blizzard Entertainment's fourth *Warcraft* game, and took over five years to develop. *WoW*, as it is popularly abbreviated, involves controlling an avatar within the continuing Tolkienesque game world, interacting with other players (and non-player characters), exploring the landscape and fighting

monsters. Players belong to one of two factions, the Alliance or the Horde, and the game continues to expand with the opening of new territories and eras, such as the dark home world of the Orcs, Draenor, in the *Burning Crusade* and *Warlords of Draenor* expansions.

Aside from the communal aspects of adventuring in Azeroth, *WoW* also supports a vibrant online community, offering prizes, forums and the opportunity to submit and display fan artwork and comic-strip storytelling. But the game has also received its fair share of criticism—over 40 per cent of *WoW* players are said to be addicted to the game to the point that they are neglecting other parts of their lives in favour of adventuring in Azeroth.

While *WoW* remains the most popular and profitable MMO of all time, since 2010 it has steadily dropped from the 12 million subscribers it enjoyed in October of that year, a victim of the shifts in taste and platforms and the rise of a number of rival MMOs.

A few types of games



Just to give an indication that gaming is a lot more complex and multifaceted than most critics realise, here is an overview:

- First-person shooter games, including *Doom*, *Quake* and *Half-Life 2*, offer worlds where the game world is rendered from the point of view of the player character. Currently, the most famous of these would be the *Call of Duty* series (warfare across a number of historical and futuristic locations) and the *Halo* series (which focuses on the combat between the human super-soldier Master Chief and a collection of alien races known as the Covenant). More particularly, the *Halo* games have been spun off into books, comics and action figures.
- Role-playing games, such as the *Final Fantasy* series, are modelled on the dice-and-pencil role-playing game *Dungeons & Dragons* and its ilk, where adventurers face a number of perils while building up experience points.
- Platform games, such as *Super Mario Brothers* and the *Mega Man* series, are the earliest form of gaming, characterised by game play that involves moving between platforms. They are largely the province of handheld consoles now.
- Simulation games, as the name implies, are simulations of such situations as flight and tank warfare. A subgenre is God games, in which players completely control, build and develop a world, whether that world involves a suburban family or an entire civilisation. The most famous of these is *The Sims*, which is essentially the world as a digital dollhouse created by Will Wright after his home burnt down and all his family possessions were lost. Others include *Spore*, from Sims creator Wright, which starts with a single-cell organism that evolves into other forms, and *Okami*, which uses the notion of a Celestial Brush so gamers can paint their own realities.
- Mobile apps, such as *Angry Birds* or *Candy Crush*, are generally simple, level-based games that can be frighteningly addictive (and endlessly merchandiseable).
- Massively multiplayer online games (described above).

The importance of gaming

While academics have been slow to analyse gaming, often incorrectly seeing it as a largely adolescent and trivial pursuit, some theorists, such as Terry Flew (2002), note that gaming does raise interesting questions about media and culture. Among these, Flew includes 'debates about the cultural appropriateness of digital content, gender identities, the experience of childhood, and intellectual property regimes' (Flew 2002: 108).

Gaming and the appropriateness of digital content

Gaming can often be seen as contributing to an overly imperialist pro-American hegemony, through its use of stereotyping villains. *America's Army*, for example, was a product of US Army investment in computer games to create a recruitment tool for the military.

Gaming technology also permits sites of resistance. *Under Siege*, for example, is similarly a military-type game, but from the perspective of the Syrian designers. It was produced as a direct response to games such as *America's Army* by designers upset by the portrayal of Arabs as the default enemy in other military games.

Gaming, gender and gender roles

Traditionally, gaming is viewed as a male pursuit, but the Entertainment Ratings Software Board found that 52 per cent of gamers in the UK were women, with 54 per cent citing the phone as their favourite gaming console (Stuart 2014). Perhaps this should not be so surprising. Female characters appear in *Tomb Raider* (Lara Croft) and *Metroid* (in one of the best gender twists in media history). As early as *Ms Pac-Man*, the gaming industry was providing strong female characters. (*Ms Pac-Man* was also one of the first popular cultural characters to take the 'Ms' title and thus be claimed as a feminist icon.) Opportunity gaming and digital avatars also allow for subverting gender, thus appealing to female players.

Is there a difference between male and female players? Studies have found that, on average, female gamers prefer problem-solving games, while male gamers prefer first-person shooters.

Gaming and interactivity

Despite the stereotype of the gamer as an isolated, socially awkward recluse, gaming provides a high degree of social contact—often more than other media forms. Multiplayer games challenge the idea of gaming being a solitary pursuit, and this social dimension also extends to the offline contexts in which people play games, not just in the domestic space of the home but also in internet cafes and at local area network parties (LAN). In South Korea, for example, hundreds of thousands of people gather to watch teams of gamers competing on large screens, and in late 2007 Australian theatre chain Hoyts started exhibiting game playing alongside cinematic releases.

Gaming also requires a high level of interactivity from players on many levels. Understanding the game controls and objectives often requires a high degree of flexibility and literacy; some game guides run to over 50,000 words. They are, in a sense, unfinished texts that interpellate the player into the space left in the game, making the gamer the final part of the game text.

This space permits the games consumer to become a **prosumer**—the convergence of a producer and consumer—by actually adding to the content of the game.

Prosumer: Where the consumer becomes a producer in their own right, actually contributing to the content of the media form in some way. An example is a computer user whose activities (such as influencing the rules of a computer game) produce convergence between a producer and consumer.

The final level of interactivity is that derived through open source models of game design, which allow for development and engineering. This is sometimes also referred to as **modding**. Modding comes in two forms. One is partial mods, which add a minimal amount of new content to the underlying structure of a game. Id Software, for example, the producers of first-person shooter *Doom*, released the source code allowing for partial mods of the game. The other is total conversions, which create an entirely new game, such as *Counter-strike*, a total conversion of *Half Life*.

Modding also raises questions about intellectual property rights. Can modders legally make money on selling their mods? What does the law say about producers of mashups using copyrighted texts to produce something new on YouTube? Who ultimately owns the land that people are building on in *Minecraft*? For the moment, these questions remain unanswered, though it has already been suggested that this is fertile ground for future litigation by industries wanting to protect their intellectual property.

The digital environment of new media encourages production and use, rather than mere consumption. As Henry Jenkins notes, the new generation of prosumers is one that is disinclined to pay for content they can access for free; equally, they are armed with, and prepared to use, the tools that enable them to repurpose copyrighted material (Jenkins 2006). We return to some of these ideas in Chapter 19.

IMMERSIVE NEWS

The line between journalism and game development may become blurred in the future. One US newspaper is already exploring the use of a games engine to present news, potentially offering a completely immersive news environment in which audiences can engage with events directly rather than just watch them.



COMPUTER-ASSISTED REPORTING (CAR)

Electronic interconnectivity has many benefits, which the media have been quick to exploit. One major benefit has been the rise of a new way of sourcing information by using vast reserves of online data that otherwise would remain just strings of zeros and ones stored somewhere that no one would look. **Computer-assisted reporting (CAR)**, sometimes known as data journalism, can be as simple as using digital technology. However, it can be more involved than that, and has been used to dig up stories that are buried in internet databases that might not otherwise have been revealed. It is at this investigative end that it is most interesting, and requires the most specialised training. One US CAR guru, Brant Houston (2004), lists some examples of CAR-derived stories:

- Swedish reporter Stefan Lisinski exposed questionable practices involving bankrupt companies by using a massive Swedish database of information on the companies and directors.
- Dutch journalist Marjan Agerbeek probed government data with spreadsheet software and was able to document poor financial planning by the country's thirteen universities.
- A Brazilian journalist dug into Brazilian government statistical reports to show that in Sao Paulo the first cause of death among children between 10 and 14 years old was homicide, and that often the killer was a parent.

#Modding: A contraction of 'game modification'; the addition of new content to games.

#Computer-assisted reporting (CAR): Internet research by journalists involving deep analysis of databases using spreadsheets and database managers.

The world's leading centre for CAR practice and research is the National Institute for Computer-Assisted Reporting (NICAR) in the USA. NICAR is run by a group called Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., which is based on the Missouri School of Journalism, a nonprofit US organisation dedicated to improving the quality of investigative reporting in that country. Founded in 1989, NICAR has trained thousands of journalists in the practical skills of finding and analysing electronic information.

According to an article by Melisma Cox (2000), CAR predates widespread use of the internet by a generation. She says that University of North Carolina's Professor Philip Meyer was one of the innovators of computer-assisted reporting, with his coverage of the Detroit riots in 1967:

He conducted a survey among African-Americans during the Detroit riots and along with John Robinson and Nathan Kaplan at the University of Michigan employed an IBM 360 mainframe to analyze survey data. The analysis revealed that, contrary to the assumed hypothesis, people who had attended college were equally likely to participate in riots as were high school dropouts. The story won him a Pulitzer Prize and signaled the beginning of a new era in computer-assisted reporting.

Back in 1967, computers were ridiculously cumbersome things, nothing like the compact and far more powerful desktop or laptop machines we know today. It took some years for computers to find their way into the routine of journalism. The rate of CAR has increased markedly since the internet provided freer access to all kinds of databases. Using CAR is a sign that journalism continues its rightful place as a watchdog and a keeper of records.

In the UK, the Centre for Investigative Journalism provides training in CAR and a practical handbook on how to use various kinds of software, such as Excel, to make sense of large data sets. The Centre lists the many ways data may be identified and obtained by a reporter (Egawhary & O'Murch 2012):

- *Sources*: a news source comes to you and tells you about particular data.
- *Undisclosed data*: you are examining an area and realise that data has been collected.
- *Regulatory bodies*: if an organisation investigates or regulates anything, it will hold data to measure the performance of whatever it is regulating.
- *Forms*: whenever you fill in a form or tick a box, ask yourself where the information goes.
- *HR departments*: these bodies will often hold a lot of statistical information about their employees.
- *Public bodies*: every publicly funded organisation will have some sort of reporting requirements—find out what they are.
- *Raw data*: information that is not in the format of statistics but statistics can be pulled out of it.
- *Government statistics*: data that, when combined with other statistics, produce a new picture.

CONCLUSION

Paul Saffo (Kluth 2006), from the Institute For the Future, said that 'revolutions tend to suck for ordinary people'. The disruption wrought by the unstoppable rise of digital and social media has not always been positive, not least because we don't know where we are headed. What does it

all mean for broad human social interaction? Are we headed into narrower and narrower virtual enclaves, interacting with disembodied avatars and receiving information that only confirms our own narrow views of the world instead of expanding our knowledge and our horizons? Or are our brains being increasingly rewired through internet usage to the point that our attention spans become shorter?

In many ways these fears speak to the projected rise of Media 3.0. The days of broadcasting have already ended (save from some events, like sporting finals or award shows), replaced by increasingly smaller narrowcasts. The public sphere is breaking into smaller and smaller public sphericules (see Figure 19.1 in the chapter on Convergence). Again anticipating Media 3.0, Saffo wrote: 'Each of us can create our own personal-media walled garden that surrounds us with comforting, confirming information and utterly shuts out anything that conflicts with our world view.' This is social dynamite, which could lead, he says, to 'the erosion of intellectual commons holding society together ... We risk huddling into tribes defined by shared prejudices' (Kluth 2006).

The injury being inflicted on our languages is of enormous importance to the continuity of ideas, and the preservation and cultivation of intellectual activity. It is hard to convey profundity—or at least profundity as we now know it—using the 140 characters of Twitter or the shorthand of SMS. To be optimistic, new techno-based languages could emerge that will help us convey ideas that were not possible in previous eras. The evolution of languages is not necessarily to be feared, although we must all do what we can to ensure that as languages change we don't lose our capacity for the thought associated with them. George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was not only a brilliant evocation of a political dystopia but also a warning about what could happen if we don't value our languages and the complex meanings they represent. His 'Newspeak' was a language devoid of humanity and complexity in meaning. We should all be aware of the risk of allowing the language we use to interact in the new media to go down the same path.

A more optimistic view is that opening up a marketplace of ideas, something the internet does so well, can only be good and positive, and that allowing for previously impossible connections between geographically diverse areas must aid mutual understanding. Some of these ideas are explored in more detail in Chapters 19 and 20.

Positive or negative, as we will maintain throughout this book, the digital and social media environment has greatly undermined the old order of media operation. The old media moguls have had to adapt—sometimes painfully. They have been very successful for over 150 years, so the argument goes, and now they are feeling the impact of forces outside their control. This is because the dynamics of the media industry have been altered beyond recognition. When the world's biggest media company is Google, which does not produce anything that even resembles media content, we can safely say that the media industry has become a very different beast.

The shift, then, seems to be away from the traditional divide between content and distribution (Media 1.0), and towards interactivity and convergence (Media 2.0) and ultimately only content and interactions that appeal to us (the projected Media 3.0). This is a measurable change between digital and social media and traditional media due to the level of interactivity afforded consumers, eroding the old distinctions between producers and audiences as digital media allow consumers to participate directly in the evolution of the narrative, to choose between a variety of events and to control their sequence.

Part 1 Introducing Media and Journalism

Increasingly, digital and social media designers are creating a space in which gamers make their own stories. Digital media are left incomplete on purpose, leaving gaps in which users can create (as in *Civilization IV*, where gamers create cities, countries and civilisations, their actions deciding the path of the game and the fate of their world) as well as modify and develop. This is an even more evolved form of interpellation, where producer and user enter into a co-creative partnership. Social media, of course, cannot function without user involvement. This, together with digitalisation, is another defining characteristic of the changing media environment—that it remains unfinished. It requires the user to become part of the text in order to complete it.

No one can say with any certainty what the future of media will actually be. All that is certain is that the pace of change will continue, so for the person starting out in the communication industries, the big issue is how to ride the wave and adapt to make the most of the digital and social media environment.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The information revolution is a ‘Cambrian explosion’ of technology-driven creativity, echoing the huge biological proliferation on Earth hundreds of millions of years ago.
- The digital and social media environment comprises information and entertainment transmitted digitally.
- Over three billion people regularly use the internet, nearly half the population of the world.
- The 24-hour news cycle means that news on the web is updated regularly, and constantly changes. The words are invariably accompanied by digital photographs, audio grabs or video footage.
- Social media is increasingly used by journalists to rapidly disseminate stories and to interact with audiences and sources.
- Social media is now standard procedure in disaster management and for professional communication of many kinds.
- Online gaming (formerly video or computer games) is the world’s most successful media industry.
- Computer-assisted reporting (CAR), sometimes known as data journalism, has been used to dig up stories that are buried in internet databases that might not otherwise have been revealed.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why is Twitter particularly useful for journalists?
- 2 What are the advantages and challenges of live blogging?
- 3 How has YouTube changed the media environment? Think about this in terms of audiences and producers of media texts.
- 4 What is CAR?
- 5 Why do you think the online gaming industry is the most profitable media industry on the planet?
- 6 Establish a Twitter account (if you don’t already have one) and build your own ‘news channel’ by following a range of news leaders. Included in your channel should be Australia’s leading journalists and news outlets. How quickly do you receive notification of a breaking story, compared with more traditional news outlets?

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CASE STUDY 1

The First World War, Journalism as the First Draft of History and the Making of the Anzac Legend

Nicola Goc

In the century since those raw young Australian and New Zealand troops scaled the cliffs at Gallipoli, the media has continued to sustain the Anzac legend. We saw this in particular during the centenary of First World War commemorations in 2015. The Anzac legend lies at the centre of Australian identity and in recent years has become a sacred, untouchable element of national pride (Bates 2013). Yet the perpetuation of the Anzac legend denies many Australians a voice in the national narrative, including Indigenous Australians, women and postwar migrants (even though Aboriginal men enlisted in the armed forces and women served as nurses). At a time when one in every four of us were born (or have parents who were born) in a country outside of Australia, why do we continue to think of ourselves as a nation in terms of one military action that took place a century ago?

While the broader issue of the media and Anzac memorialisation is not the focus of this case study, it is nevertheless worthy of discussion in the context of media influence, the creation of history and the Anzac story. In this case study we look at the role journalism played in the creation of the Anzac legend.

Only a handful of accredited Australian journalists reported on the action at Gallipoli in 1915, but they were the sole media source of public information and played a central role in the formation of how Australia thought about itself as a nation in the post-colonial era. From these journalists' reports, the Anzac myth was formed and developed around two parallel themes: the unique Australian character and the birth of a nation. However, it was not an Australian journalist who planted the seed that was to become the Anzac myth but an Englishman, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett.

This study briefly examines the work of three Australian journalists reporting from Turkey: Ashmead-Bartlett (1881–1931) and Australians C.E.W. Bean (1879–1968) and Keith Murdoch (1888–1952). The writing of Ashmead-Bartlett and Bean was highly influential in shaping the Anzac legend, while it was the actions of Ashmead-Bartlett and Keith Murdoch that had a direct influence on the course of the war for Australian and New Zealand troops at Gallipoli.

Censorship

At the outbreak of war in August 1914, the Federal Government introduced the *War Precautions Act 1914* under which censorship controls were implemented and media censorship was extended to press coverage of both domestic and international events. Under the Act there was a centralising of power in the government and its authorities, and for journalists and editors the imposition of wartime censorship was a source of frustration. For the duration of the war Australian correspondents were subjected to several layers of censorship: field censorship (by the army), British government censorship (from the War Office in London) and Australian government censorship (under the *War Precautions Act 1914*). The Australian press complained constantly that the appointed censors had no real understanding of the newspaper industry. The *Argus* outlined the problem on 29 December 1914, pointing out that those chosen as censors had 'no training and possess no aptitude' for dealing with newspaper work, 'which they do not in the least understand' and frequently 'showed ludicrous ignorance ... and some of them have not the least notion of when to censor or how' (Broadbent 2009; *Argus*, 29 December 1914: 4).



But the press was also keen to support the war effort, and individual journalists in the field practised self-censorship, seeing themselves as part of the Australian war effort; through their reports they justified the military objectives of the conflict. The press was overall a willing participant in its failure to report on the war fully or accurately (Knightly 1975). Writing in 1928, Arthur Ponsonby acknowledged that the 'effective prosecution of modern war required state-endorsed mendacity, and the press was essential to maintain the conspiracy of silence, galvanise support, mobilise recruitment, conceal blunders and justify the loss of lives' (Ponsonby 1928).

Charles E.W. Bean

Charles E.W. Bean (1879–1968) was the only Australian journalist who reported for the duration of the war. Oxford-educated Bean was born in Bathurst, New South Wales, and worked as school teacher, judge's associate and barrister before turning to journalism in 1908 at the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He had an eye for detail and an interest in recording the experiences of ordinary Australians and was sent to the outback to report on rural life and later worked as a correspondent in London. With the outbreak of war, a ballot was held for the appointment of Australia's official war correspondent with the AIF troops and Bean narrowly beat political journalist Keith Murdoch.

But despite having been appointed as Australia's official war correspondent, Charles Bean was unable to get accreditation from the British, who wanted their own journalists to report on the war to the colonies. The Australian and New Zealand press and governments resisted, arguing it was fundamental that their own journalists be accredited. In early April 1915 the British were still resisting the demands from the colonials and it was not until 20 April—five days before the landing at Gallipoli—that the British government finally relented and Bean and a New Zealand representative, Malcolm Ross, were appointed as War correspondents with the Expeditionary Force.

While Bean did not have the writing flair or descriptive ability of other war correspondents, and some Australian newspapers stopped using his reports in favour of the more engaging dispatches of Ashmead-Bartlett, Charles Patrick Smith and Phillip Schuler, Bean's strengths were his eye for detail, his ability to view the war from the perspective of the troops on the ground and also, as official historian, his ability to gather and edit the evocative writings of journalists and eyewitnesses to develop a broader national narrative of the conflict. His credibility in producing the seminal history of the war lay in the fact that he was the only journalist with first-hand experience of Australian troops for the duration of the war. After the evacuation of Gallipoli, Bean edited *The Anzac Book* (Bean 1916), an anthology of stories, poems, cartoons and colour illustrations written and drawn by the Anzac soldiers while they were in the Gallipoli trenches. The book includes detailed accounts of the Gallipoli landing and campaign, and contributed to the myth-making of the Gallipoli experience. His writing skill and editing came to the fore after the war when he set about drawing upon his own observations and the experiences of other journalists to write seven volumes, and edit five others, in the seminal twelve-volume *Official History of Australia in the War 1914–1918* (Bean 1921–42) in which he immortalised the exploits of Australian troops and played a central role in the popularisation of the Anzac legend.

The first report of the landing

The first brief anonymous reports of Allied troops landing on Turkish soil were published in the Australian press on 26 April: 'The Allies' squadrons bombarded the Straits at various points west of Gallipoli, and troops have been landed at three places, namely at Suvla, on the Gallipoli peninsula; at Enos, the seaport on the Aegean coast of European Turkey; and at Bulair, a fortified town on the narrow neck of the Gallipoli peninsula' (*Argus*, 26 April 1915: 7).

The Australian public, hungry for news from the front, was frustrated by the complex processes of censorship



and the restriction to two cable services from Britain to Australia, which meant not only delays in the reports getting to the Australian public, but also to a paucity of reports. It was not until 8 May that Ashmead-Bartlett's eyewitness account of the landing at Gallipoli was published in Australia [English papers had published the story a day earlier]. The anticipation of this firsthand account of Australians in action meant that his article was received with a heightened anticipation. The fact that this first stirring eye-witness account came from the pen of an Englishman, rather than a partisan Australian, gave the report added gravitas and authority.

Ashmead-Bartlett's stirring first report

Ashmead-Bartlett (1881–1931) was an experienced war correspondent before the war. He had reported as a special war correspondent on the Russo-Japanese war (1904), the French campaign in Morocco (1907) and the first Balkan War (1912–13). He was appointed by the British Admiralty as the Newspapers Proprietor's Association representative in 1914, which enabled him to supply copy to multiple British, European, American, Australian and New Zealand newspapers. His report of the landing at Gallipoli was published in various forms across Australia and New Zealand, with editors often providing their own editorial comment. The *Mercury* newspaper in Hobart, under the headline, 'Australians Cover Themselves with Glory', published Ashmead-Bartlett's account with the following introduction on 12 May 1915:

We publish today a brilliant description of the landing of the Australians and New Zealanders on Gallipoli Peninsula by that experienced war correspondent, Mr Ashmead Bartlett. It is a thrilling story, a story that will make us all feel proud of our soldiers. They have shown that, though transplanted to these southern skies, the breed is still the same as that of the men of Mons and Waterloo, and a hundred other great

battles. They were in a desperate position when they landed on the narrow beach in the dawn, but they did not hesitate. They carried the Turkish trenches on the beach and on the cliffs, and, without the support of artillery, held on all day of Sunday, April 25. Their dash and courage saved the situation, and no troops that ever marched have done better. (*Mercury*, 12 May 1915: 5)

In the following excerpts from Ashmead-Bartlett's report we can see the evolution of the Anzac legend in the phrases embedded into his narrative:

RUSH FOR THE TRENCHES

The Australians rose to the occasion. They did not wait for orders, or for the boats to reach the beach, but sprang into the sea, formed a sort of rough line, and rushed at the enemy's trenches. Their magazines were not charged, so they just went in with the cold steel, and it was over in a minute for the Turks in the first trench had been either bayoneted or had run away, and the Maxim guns were captured.

A CRITICAL MOMENT

Then the Australians found themselves facing an almost perpendicular cliff of loose sandstone covered with thick shrubbery. Somewhere half-way up the enemy had a second trench strongly held, from which there poured a terrible fire on the troops below and on those pulling back to the torpedo-boat destroyers for a second landing party.

SCALING THE CLIFFS

Here was a tough proposition to tackle in the darkness, but these Colonials are practical above all else, and went about it in a practical way. They stopped for a few minutes to pull themselves



together, got rid of their packs and charged the magazines of their rifles. Then this race of athletes proceeded to scale the cliffs, without responding to the enemy's fire. They lost some men, but did not worry. In less than a quarter of an hour the Turks had been hurled out of their second position, all either bayoneted or fled.

A STAND AS WORTHY AS MONS

For 15 mortal hours the Australians and New Zealanders occupied the heights under an incessant shell fire, and without the moral and material support of a single gun from the shore. They were subjected the whole time to violent counter-attacks from a brave enemy, skillfully led, and with snipers deliberately picking off every officer who endeavoured to give the command or to lead his men. No finer feat has happened in this war than this sudden landing in the dark, and the storming of the heights, and, above all, the holding on whilst the reinforcements were landing. These raw colonial troops, in these desperate hours, proved worthy to fight side by side with the heroes of the battles of Mons, the Aisne, Ypres, and Neuve-Chapelle. (*Mercury*, 12 May 1915: 5)

While this account about the Australian and New Zealand troops was written from an Englishman's perspective, for an English audience, when read by Australian and New Zealanders at home it helped cement the concepts central to the Anzac legend: courage under fire, athletic prowess, mateship, practical approach, devil-may-care attitude and casual disregard for authority. Phrases such as: 'The Australians rose to the occasion'; 'No finer feat'; 'these colonials are practical above all else' and 'this race of athletes' entered the Australian psyche. The newspapers published his account under nationalistic headlines: Australian Heroes; The Landing of the Troops; Wonderful

Grit and Dash' (*Mercury*, 12 May 1915: 5). There was a sense of national pride that Australia as a nation had stepped out of the British spotlight and into its own. Ashmead-Bartlett's account led him to become the focus of national press coverage and he was the subject of glowing profiles by other Australian Gallipoli correspondents including Charles P. Smith (*Argus*).

In the years afterwards, the Australian press continued to acknowledge Ashmead-Bartlett's role in the creation of a sense of nationhood and the Anzac legend. Charles Bean, in his diary, acknowledged the Englishman's journalistic prowess: 'His written dispatches are full of life and colour, hit hard, and give a brilliant idea which is remarkably true. He exaggerates a bit to make his points ... and yet he's a lover of the truth' (Bean 1915). At the time of Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's death in 1931, press reports acknowledged his role in the creation of the Anzac legend: 'The Man Who Made Australian Soldiers Famous: "This Race of Athletes"; Ashmead-Bartlett's Epic Story of the Landing' were the obituary headlines in the *Adelaide Advertiser* (9 May 1931: 7).

Keith Murdoch, Ashmead-Bartlett and beating the censor

Keith Murdoch was the Melbourne political correspondent for the *Sydney Sun* (Federal Parliament was still held in Melbourne at the time) who lost the tight ballot to the more experienced Bean. Instead, Murdoch was appointed the managing editor of the London cable service run by the *Sun* and the *Melbourne Herald* in 1915. En route to London in 1915 he was asked by the Australian Prime Minister, Andrew Fisher, to report on the state of the Australian troops and their supplies in Cairo. He arrived in Egypt and lobbied the Commander in Chief of Gallipoli operations, Englishman General Sir Ian Hamilton, to be allowed to visit the Gallipoli Peninsula. Reluctant at first, Hamilton relented, but ensured that Murdoch signed the war correspondent's declaration undertaking 'not to attempt to correspond by



any other route or by any other means than that officially sanctioned' and promising he would not, for the duration of the war 'impart to anyone military information of a confidential nature ... unless first submitted to the Chief Field Censor' (Knightly 1975: 101–2).

On arrival at Imbros, Murdoch met Ashmead-Bartlett who by this time was embittered by the disastrous course of the war and what he saw as the needless loss of life. He told Murdoch that Hamilton was creating unreasonable difficulties in allowing him to report the truth of the failed campaign to the British government and public. His reports, he said, were not only heavily censored but held back until Hamilton's own official cables had reached London. He was, when Murdoch met him, 'hostile, pessimistic' (Knightly 1975: 102) and looking for ways in which his accounts could influence the government. Consequently, he:

convinced Murdoch that a major disaster would occur during the winter unless the British government and the British people could be told the truth. Murdoch must have realised that almost by accident he was in possession of information that would certainly rank as one of the great war stories of the war. He agreed with Ashmead-Bartlett that the only way to get the story out would be to break the rules and get an uncensored dispatch back to Britain. (Knightly 1975: 102)

Ashmead-Bartlett wrote a long and detailed letter to the British Prime Minister Asquith, and Murdoch agreed to take it to London. At Marseilles, Murdoch was stopped and threatened with arrest unless he hand the letter over to the authorities. The *Guardian* correspondent H.W. Nevinson had allegedly betrayed them after overhearing Ashmead-Bartlett and Murdoch talking about their plans. Hamilton ordered Murdoch to proceed to London and on 23 September 1915 Murdoch went to the Australian High Commission

where he dictated a letter to the Australian Prime Minister Andrew Fisher from what he could remember of Ashmead-Bartlett's letter and their conversations. According to Phillip Knightly, the letter had 'strong journalistic overtones':

It was an amazing document, a mixture of error, fact, exaggeration, prejudice, and the most sentimental patriotism, which made highly damaging charges against the British general staff and Hamilton, many of them untrue. But the basis of the charges—that the Gallipoli expedition was in danger of disaster—was correct, and Murdoch's action, questionable though it may have been, had resounding consequences. (Knightly 1975: 103)

When Asquith became aware of Ashmead-Bartlett's letter, and under pressure from Fisher who had received Murdoch's letter, General Sir Ian Hamilton lost his command and the evacuation of Gallipoli began on 12 December 1915. A Royal Commission in 1916, at which both Murdoch and Ashmead-Bartlett gave evidence, found that the campaign had been a mistake.

Journalism as the first draft of history

Journalism, in the hands of a gifted writer, can have an inordinate influence on the way historical events are recorded and remembered. Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett's stirring account of Gallipoli sowed the seed for what was to become Australia's most potent national narrative, the Anzac legend, while the exploits of Ashmead-Bartlett and Keith Murdoch, in flouting censorship laws and trying to use journalism to impact on the events of the day, have largely been forgotten. Charles Bean's comprehensive and meticulous detailing of the Australian soldiers throughout the entire war (1914–1918) in his highly readable twelve volumes, immortalised the exploits of Australian troops and cemented the Anzac legend in the Australian psyche.



Conclusion

A potent is the Anzac legend today that it continues to form national narratives across all aspects of Australian life. In 2001, the Australian cricket team on its way to Britain for the Ashes series against England had a stopover at Gallipoli. The Australian media was there to film, photograph and report on this orchestrated event, recording the team visiting the battlefield, the cricketers having swapped their gummy green caps—a potent sporting symbol of Australian nationhood—for the iconic slouch hat. It was a carefully staged media opportunity as the team re-enacted a famous cricket match played on a place called Shell Green by Anzac soldiers late in 1915 in sight of enemy artillery positions. The soldiers' intention at the time was to fool the enemy into thinking no evacuation activity was under way; that was normal. The Australian cricket team's intention was twofold: to strike a chord back home and at the same time send a message to the English team that their formidable players, endowed with the same qualities as their heroic Anzac forbears, were on their way to engage them in battle (Broadbent 2009).

Leading up to the centenary of Gallipoli in 2015, there was a concerted effort by the Australian government and the media to reinvigorate the Anzac legend. This reoccupation with the Gallipoli story has impacted on the writing of Australian history by both journalists and historians for a century and has contributed to what historians Henry Reynolds and Marilyn Lake call 'the militarisation of that history' (2010). In the aftermath of the 2009 Anzac day coverage in the media, Geoffrey Barker wrote that the memorialisation of the First World War had become 'a hugely bloated media event. Solemnity has become sentimentality; banality has triumphed over profundity in the contemplation of sacrifice' (Barker 2009).

Historian Bruce Scates argues that the centenary year should have been a time to 'widen the ambit of remembrance, to reckon with the aftermath of Anzac' (2015). He reminds us that a 'legion of blind and crippled and insane men and women, irreparably damaged by war' returned to Australia. 'These harsh realities of the aftermath of war do not lend themselves to the rousing rhetoric' but rather 'highlight the obscenity of what has become a parody of remembrance, Anzac as carnival, commodity and re-enactment, a brand sold by tour guides, breweries and supermarkets. In 1915, the landing failed. In 2015, we failed that generation yet again' (Scates 2015).

There is no doubting the attraction of the Anzac story, nor the fortitude of those courageous young Australian and New Zealand men who scaled the cliffs of that Turkish beach in 1915. However, it is worth asking: why do Australians today continue to accord the Anzac story priority over every other aspect of our history and what role does the media continue to play in the perpetuation of the Anzac legend at the expense of other moments in our history?

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TOOLS 1

Print Media and Broadcast Interviews

Liz Tynan

Introduction

A journalistic interview is often said to be a conversation with intent. While it may have some of the characteristics of a social conversation, it has a specific information-gathering goal that should never be forgotten. An interview is always structured, and should be strictly controlled by the reporter, whether in print or electronic media (allowing for key differences between the various media). Interviews are often exercises in psychology, intellectual jousting, nuance and subtle manipulation as much as straightforward information gathering. They can be stressful, and require the reporter to be fearless and well prepared. Reporters use interviews as a major method of gathering material from primary sources. They can be as simple as a quick phone conversation to confirm minor details, or as formal as a full-blown studio production with all the trimmings. Sometimes you may even find it is better not to use the word 'interview' when arranging to speak to a source, but rely instead on words such as 'chat', 'checking', 'confirming' or some other reassuring word. Here in Tools 1, we look at print and broadcast interviewing, beginning with principles common to both.

Interviewing for research

The interview is, among other things, a research device. The information gathered during this stage must be treated with the same scepticism as all other material that will be used to prepare a story. The fact that someone has made assertions during an interview does not guarantee that a single word they have said is true. Reporters must always substantiate the statements they include in their news and feature stories, even if those statements come from primary sources.

The interview is a staple of the journalistic process, whether for hard or soft news, features or profiles in print, or news, current affairs or documentaries in the electronic media. As do all other research techniques, the interview has varying degrees of reliability; however, direct interaction with the characters who contribute to a story has many benefits:

- It provides a means of verifying the information.
- It is a means of assigning responsibility for the information (or possibly misinformation) to someone other than the reporter and/or the media outlet.
- It gives your story authority and credibility.
- It provides quotes and anecdotes.
- It enables the writer to find out more about a subject.
- It sometimes reveals more than words can convey about the person, such as gestures, personality traits and habits that might add to the writer's understanding of the subject.

The words of the interviewee are not the only basis for the understanding that a writer gains from a face-to-face interview. The rest comes from impressions, countenance (facial expressions and body language) and sometimes the surroundings in which the interview takes place. These can give the

reporter hints about the interviewee's state of mind, and also help them find their way into the story itself, adding descriptive detail to the story. Mark Colvin, host of the ABC radio current affairs show *PM* said: 'I've come to believe that the great secret of interviewing is really just one word: listening.'

Interviewing for print

The print interview brings the reporter into direct dialogue with primary sources. Some reporters new to the profession feel uncomfortable with the interview process as it involves close engagement and potentially a high level of vulnerability. New reporters may try to wriggle out of interviews and depend on arm's-length written sources, such as media releases or material on the internet. But in many cases journalistic stories cannot be complete without interview material, and young reporters have to face up to the challenge.

Strategies for contacting people for an interview depend on the type of story and the reason for the interview. A late-breaking major **news story** will obviously dictate when and how you contact your sources. For more routine stories, use your common sense. If the interview concerns the person's work, call the workplace during business hours if possible. If it is for a profile or a feature story, it may be acceptable to call the person at home, as long as you are mindful of a few guidelines:

- Call at a convenient time. Bad times include weekdays at 7 o'clock in the morning when people are getting ready for work, at dinner time, and after 9 o'clock at night.
- Declare fully your reason for calling. You must state your name and your news organisation, and that you are seeking an on-the-record interview.
- If the response is negative, accept this and thank the person for their time. Do not be pushy. The person may reconsider your invitation to an interview, so leave your contact details.
- If the response is positive, arrange a mutually suitable location.
- The optimum time to set aside for a print news interview is 30 to 40 minutes, but you might need considerably more time for a feature. Predict a time and try to stick to it.
- Strict laws govern any media activity involving children. Before attempting to interview anyone under the age of 18, consult with a senior editorial person.

Interviews, as much as possible, should be held in places where interruptions are likely to be minimal. Mobile phones belonging to both parties should be switched off. It is insulting (and counterproductive) for the reporter to take a call while interviewing someone. Don't do it. While some reporters prefer not to eat while interviewing, others happily conduct interviews over lunch. This is a matter of personal preference, but decide ahead of time whether you really want the ordering and consuming of food to punctuate the interview. For a straightforward news story interview, just catching up with the person in his or her office and carrying out the interview quickly and efficiently is often enough. A news interview is not a social visit; it should always take the shortest amount of time to get the job done.

The first key to mastering the interview is preparation. Being prepared provides you with an armoury. It helps to minimise the risk of being conned by the interviewee or being unable to recognise a stunning admission or a whole new line of enquiry. While you must always be alert to any new information in an interview, your mind will be more receptive to that new information if you have a firm grasp on the existing information available through research.

News story: Information packaged in order to afford maximum readability; either in the pattern of beginning–middle–end, or in the inverted pyramid pattern of most important–slightly less important–least important.

You may have already decided on your angle and who the other interviewees should be. Sometimes the interview itself will change the plan you have drawn up; in journalism, flexibility is a virtue. You should have read widely and deeply beforehand, and formulated a range of questions.

News interviews tend to have two basic kinds of questions:

- **closed questions**, which usually have yes or no answers
- **open questions**, which may elicit a range of possible responses within the constraints of the question; these are questions that begin: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How? or Why?

Both types of question have their purpose. A closed question may quickly get you the answer you need without further elaboration, so it has its place in an interview, particularly when establishing baseline information. A skilled interviewer knows how to balance closed and open questions so that the interview yields the kind of responses needed for the story.

One of the real skills of the journalist is to formulate questions that will fully reveal the story. Questions should be structured logically and thought through, even when following an unanticipated line of enquiry: ‘The reporter should resist preconceived ideas, recognising that an open mind can achieve unexpected results’ (Conley 2002: 193). Allowing the interviewee to see how much research you have done and what conclusions might be drawn from that research—while still allowing them opportunities to confirm or deny information or previous statements—is more effective than going in with a judgmental mindset that has the story set beforehand.

The rhythm of an interview may benefit from you beginning with simple closed questions to avoid initial confrontation that may cause your interviewee to clam up. Closed questions are usually specific and fact-based; for example, ‘Will you be attending the conference?’ or ‘Are you planning to vote for the amendment?’ These questions are a good opportunity to get standard but essential and uncontested information. This part of the interview is often also a good time to check spellings and titles, and other factual information. You then move on to the open questions, which are more opinion based and invite open-ended responses.

By all means, during this part of the interview, be confrontational if that is needed. Part of being a journalist involves pursuing important lines of enquiry, especially if someone is trying to stop you. However, never raise your voice or be aggressive. Be persistent and don’t let the source off the hook. Not all interviews become confrontational, but sometimes they must. Don’t be confrontational just to maintain a gung-ho reporter image. The story is always the thing, not the image.

Being the people’s witness

Journalism, or at least the more elevated and noble forms of journalism, is often referred to as ‘the people’s witness’, which may be a useful way of seeing your role in an interview. Ask the questions that you think average people want and deserve to have answered, so that their view of an event is as complete as possible. This generally means that you run through the closed, factual questions to establish the essential features of the issue or event, then go on to ask open questions that begin with Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How? or Why? Most standard news stories will answer these questions.

#Closed questions:

Questions whose answers are limited to ‘yes’, ‘no’, or similar precise information.

#Open questions:

Questions whose answers can elicit a wide range of responses; usually these questions begin with the words Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How? or Why?

If the interviewee fails to answer your questions, it will tend to be a warning signal. If you let the talent get away with not answering the questions, then you may lose control of the interview and hand the advantage to the interviewee. Use evasion as a cue, formulate follow-up questions and dig accordingly later.

One of the biggest problems that reporters, particularly inexperienced reporters, face is being too wedded to pre-prepared questions. While it is crucial to formulate questions based upon a range of research ahead of time, do not let your questions blindly dictate the course of the interview. Listen as well as ask.

Matt Brown, ABC news and current affairs political journalist: ‘Governments have power, and I have an obligation to scrutinise it ... You are here, professionally, to negotiate your way through telling the story of what they are doing. You can’t do that as an unequivocally hostile person. You can’t do it as a compliant, obsequious reteller of their words.’

Take special care to ensure that your questions are not long and convoluted, requiring multifaceted answers. Always focus on one question at a time, and don’t make a difficult interview even harder and almost certainly less effective by stringing two or more questions together. Keep your questions blunt, almost to the point of rudeness, while not actually being rude. Ask this sort of question: ‘What is the city council planning to minimise the risk to residents of rising sea level?’, rather than ‘Do you think that climate change is likely to cause rising sea levels in coastal development areas, what are you planning to do to help home owners in those areas deal with the problems of rising water, and should there be global mandatory targets to cut down on greenhouse gases?’ The latter questions will either have the interviewee floundering or will give the person an opportunity to evade answering in the ensuing confusion.

Students often ask whether audio recording of print interviews is necessary. This is a judgment call for you, and possibly a policy issue in the newsroom you join. Many reporters always record, and just as many others never do. To help you make up your own mind, here are some points to ponder. A recording is a strong piece of evidence should your story be disputed by the source/s. It will also help if your written notes turn out to be inadequate. However, you must always take notes, even if you are recording. Recording equipment can easily break down, and if you have no recording and no notes, you are in big trouble. Memory is notoriously unreliable, particularly if the interview has been at all stressful. Trying to recreate direct quotes from memory almost never works—human memory is not that efficient.

The downside to making recordings is the process of transcribing. Transcribing the entire interview is not always necessary, particularly for general news. Note down exactly where in a recording you can find the quote you need, so that you can return to it easily to check what was actually said. Some reporters (often specialists, such as science journalists) do prefer to work from a full transcript, but there is a price to pay in terms of time and repetitive strain injury. Few daily journalists have the luxury of obtaining a full transcript, which is why you need to find your place in the interview quickly to avoid wading through masses of audio.

Shorthand

Most mainstream media organisations require their cadets to learn shorthand. It is a useful skill, and may obviate the need for a tape recorder. But you have to be really proficient to rely on it. Even those journalists who do take notes in shorthand will sometimes record as well.

For legal reasons, journalists usually keep their notebooks for at least seven years. It may take a while for someone to dispute your version of the story. Don't rush to throw out your raw materials. Store them away for future reference, if needed.

Off the record

A request for a part of an interview to be off the record may come up, possibly unexpectedly. It generally means that the interviewee wants the information to be public, but doesn't want to be associated with it for some reason. Off-the-record statements must be respected, and preferably an agreement about this form of information would be negotiated before the start of the interview. If a source wishes to go off the record during the interview without prior warning, most journalists will be interested to hear what they have to say. Problems may arise if sources retrospectively wish to change some information from on the record to off the record. This is why it is important to be clear on the exact nature of the information you are receiving during an interview and why some journalists prefer to first discuss and reach agreement with sources on the prospect of off-the-record information.

Sometimes reporters gather interview material without meeting the source, generally via email. While some older journalists may doubt whether an email interview is a proper interview at all, it is increasingly common. News and information gathering by email has benefits and drawbacks. The benefits may be summarised as:

- certainty of content (with written responses to questions)
- time efficiency
- absence of inhibitive environmental factors
- absence of phone call costs and time zone issues for overseas interviewees.

Email correspondence can produce certainty on the part of the respondent, because there is more time to think about the answers to questions. Written responses also eliminate any possibility of the writer misinterpreting her or his own notes. Emails can be really useful when checking facts with, for example, a scientist or other expert overseas.

The drawbacks are that email responses may be spun and carefully planned rather than being spontaneous and perhaps more truthful. Interviewees may find it easier to simply not answer questions that have been sent by email, or be selective in their answers. Also, the reporter can't quickly follow up a new angle that presents itself. Be aware that the interviewee may have more control over this kind of interview.

Telephone or Skype interviewing is common and convenient. Sometimes journalists use telephone recording devices (not phone taps, which are illegal, but just simple telephone pick-ups of various kinds) to ensure accuracy. You must never record an interview without first getting permission from the interviewee. Do not make secret recordings. Be upfront about everything you are doing; you are not a spy.

The telephone interview is the quickest way for a newspaper journalist to gather primary source information, and its speed and the absence of inhibitive factors can produce a degree of honesty that may not be achievable in either face-to-face or written interviews. But there is a trade-off. The main disadvantage is that you can't pick up on most of the nonverbal signals, mentioned earlier, that are available in a face-to-face interview. The rise of Skype has helped to overcome this limitation.

Broadcast interviewing

Interviewing in the broadcast media has a twofold purpose: it is intended to gather the information that forms the basis of news stories or other forms of journalistic content, and it has to provide a range of sound to give radio or television broadcasts a multiplicity of voices (and vision in the latter case). This section focuses on broadcast-quality audio interviews, but does not deal with the specialised area of capturing images.

Broadcast news thrives on variety, so reporters are always looking to make their packages as lively and as authoritative as possible. Liveliness and authority come from having lots of people contributing their voices to your broadcast. The diversity of voices makes it lively; the qualifications of the interviewee lend authority.

Standard radio news interviews intended to provide grabs for regular bulletins—the bread and butter of radio news—tend to be shorter, simpler, more formal and more structured than a print interview. For news, you are aiming to obtain your grab and the main facts or opinions, then get out as quickly as possible to package your story for the next bulletin. News happens quickly in radio in particular, so you don't have the luxury of time.

As a general rule, it is wise to limit the number of questions for a broadcast news story to no more than four. Even this might be too many. Sometimes you will get all you need with two or three well-directed, well-worded questions. This is particularly the case with news. Current affairs and documentaries are more probing and will require more questioning. Even so, you must be careful not to get an hour's worth of recording, and then suffer agonies trying to edit all your sound down to the two-to-five minute package often required for current affairs.

Despite the fact that you don't have much time, you still need to do your preparation. Without this preparation you won't know what angle to pursue, and angle is everything in broadcast news. A single strong news angle is the basis of all broadcast news stories.

You will do your own research first; then, when you are with the **talent** (interviewee), you will first talk informally to provide an outline of what is to be discussed. In all kinds of broadcast interviews you should give your subject a chance to prepare for the interview before you start recording. There are some obvious exceptions to this—a prime ministerial doorstep for one, or a hurriedly arranged interview with someone at the scene of a disaster—but for your standard news story you would let the talent know the angle you are going to be taking so that he or she can be prepared for what is to come. Spend a few minutes chatting to your source before you begin the formal part of the interview. This is also an opportunity to do a sound check on your talent's voice.

You will also need to decide on the location for the interview. Will it be done in the field, in the studio or on the telephone? Increasingly these days, radio journalists undertake phone interviews in the production studio, where a broadcast-quality recording can be made. However, sometimes

talent: In electronic media, the person interviewed for a story.

a story benefits from the associated atmosphere being incorporated as soundscape. An example might be at a demonstration, where you can capture the sound of the crowd chanting or other relevant background noise. These environments are less controlled, and you do have to take care to ensure that ambient noise does not render voice recording unusable. You will need to get your talent away a bit from the other noise and get the microphone close enough to them.

Another option is a studio interview, where sound conditions are optimal for good recording as you are in a soundproof environment. This is a good option for a longer interview, perhaps for documentaries or current affairs. It is also a setting where the journalist tends to have more of the upper hand than elsewhere, as the talent may feel that he or she is outside of their comfort zone.

If you have to interview someone in their own space, such as an office, ensure that the person takes the phone off the hook and switches off their mobile phone. Encourage them to hang a 'Do not disturb' sign on the door if possible. If you have a choice, select a carpeted room, without much furniture, to provide the best audio recording environment.

In any setting, you always need to control the interview. You must have a clear idea of the outcome you are seeking, and not let the talent take you off on different tangents or dominate. You should retain your objectivity at all times, and ensure that you stay professional, even if you are being confrontational.

Avoid verbal reassurance

In a print interview, you will often give your interviewee clues about how you are responding to what he or she is saying. Often this will be saying things like 'Yes', 'Right' or some other cue word. You might also make noises like 'Hmmm' or 'Ohh'. For broadcast interviews, you must resist the temptation to offer any sort of verbal reassurance. It will render your recording confusing or irritating for the listener, and in fact may make it unusable. Instead, get into the habit of nodding or making some other noiseless gesture if you feel you need to encourage your interviewee.

Always keep your eyes focused on the talent. If you are drifting away and not apparently listening to what the person is saying, they will start to lose the thread and, again, your recording quality will be compromised. Always be involved in the interview. Try as much as possible to use the open question technique (Who?, What?, When?, Where?, How?, Why?). You want the interviewee to supply a usable and informative grab, not just a yes/no response to your supply of information. Yes/no answers are almost always useless in the electronic media.

Getting broadcast-quality quotes from interviewees requires you to control the way the interview unfolds. Take care in live and recorded interviews not to ask double-barrelled questions. These are likely to result in the interviewee being confused, or answering only one of the questions. Even more so than in print interviews, you must keep your questions really short and simple, to the point of bluntness (again, without being rude). You want the interviewee to understand the question immediately, and not flounder around trying to figure out what you are getting at. The only way to do it this way is to think through your questioning ahead of time. It is recklessly optimistic to believe that you will always be able to think cogently and comprehensively on your feet. You must always prepare.

TIPS ON WHAT TO DO AND WHAT TO AVOID

Make sure you always:

- select quotes carefully
- honour all confidences
- remain calm and professional
- for print, record the interview carefully, take notes and possibly make an audio recording as well
- for broadcast, choose a good sound environment and limit your questions to the essentials.

Make sure you never:

- attempt an interview without solid preparation
- push your personal opinion
- misrepresent the purpose of the interview
- secretly record the interview
- take a phone call during an interview
- ask convoluted, multipart questions
- get sidetracked or railroaded by the interviewee.

To really shine:

- be as well prepared as possible to make the most of your time with the primary source and listen attentively to everything that is said.

Conclusion

Interviews are the front line in the interaction between the media and sources, and they are where the people's witness does much of the actual witnessing. You will find interviews easier once you become more comfortable with the idea of being a representative of the people for whom you are reporting. Part of being an effective representative involves being well prepared, which will help you stay in control. A well-controlled interview is a good interview, and a good interview usually means a good story.

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PART MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

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Media industries are the engine rooms of our culture. They produce the images, words and stories that inform us and entertain us. They tell us what is going on in the world and they offer us different ways of being in that world.

This means that media industries are also creative industries: they combine creative skill with media production, distribution and technology to manufacture products that can be industrial yet innovative. The media industries produce the dialogic webs that make up the mediasphere.

In Part 2, we look at each of the major media industries, including radio, film, television and public relations.

Case Study 2 ('If That Doesn't Suit You, Get Out': Three Minutes at the Crossroads of Army Communication) shows how the chief of the Australian Army commandeered one of the most important means of communication today—social media—to initiate a fundamental culture change.

Tools 2 (How to Conduct a Media Conference) introduces media practitioners and journalists to some of the basic elements of promotional culture: how to plan it, how to create it, how to work with it and how to use it effectively and ethically.

5

RADIO: THE TRIBAL DRUM

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

Listen to the radio—really listen to it. What do you hear? Voices talking, voices singing, instruments playing music, maybe machinery, maybe animals: the sounds of life in various forms. Your ears are picking up soundwaves that have been created and sent by some surprisingly simple electronic equipment into your brain – into your mind. You then construct the meaning according to your own unique brain wiring, according to the sounds that have significance for you. This is the medium that Marshall McLuhan (1967) called a ‘tribal drum’ that turns society into a ‘single echo chamber’ and thus, he claimed, was more buried in our psyche than any other medium. Even the advent of digital recording and editing equipment in most Australian radio newsrooms some years ago hardly changed the medium, and radio remains a simple technology that works best when people understand its essential simplicity and therefore can tap into its strength.

Notice that you imagine things when you listen to sound from the radio. You might picture the lead singer of the band whose music is playing, or you might imagine a forest or a beach, a cityscape or a farmyard, depending on the sound that is being

sent to you. You might picture the DJ or the guest who is speaking, even if you have never seen either of these people before. You might only be half aware that you are doing this, but in some way your brain is filling in the gaps of an enticing little world that is being created for you. All you have to do is provide the imagination.

In this chapter we look at:

- how early radio quickly established its special power
- the Marshall McLuhan interpretation
- how radio has developed many different uses, including propaganda
- why radio has a unique place in mass communication.

BEGINNINGS

Radio began early in the 20th century, and quickly spread around the globe. The technology had flowed from physics research, from basic investigations into electricity and electromagnetism. This fundamental enquiry into physical phenomena evolved into the capture and transmission of sound waves in the latter years of the 19th century and early years of the 20th century. Radio was initially called 'wireless' technology because electromagnetic waves were sent and received via the medium of air, without wires to carry the signal, unlike the earlier telegraph technology. This was almost like magic at the time. Italian physicist Guglielmo Marconi took up earlier work by the pioneering theorist James Clerk Maxwell and the experimental scientist Heinrich Hertz to send a telegraphic (dot–dot–dash–dash) wireless signal in 1901. A few years later, the first radio signal of a human voice was sent and received. Transmitters and **antennas** of increasing strength were built in a short space of time as the potential of this new knowledge was recognised. Radio became a reality.

Radio stations started springing up in the northern hemisphere in the early 1920s. Australia was not far behind; this country is known as an early adopter of new technology. The very first person heard on Australia's airwaves was a young soprano named Miss Deering. At 8 o'clock on the night of 23 November 1923, her voice went to air on Australia's first radio station, 2SB, in Sydney, singing the now-forgotten song 'Farewell in the Desert'. This station changed its name soon after to 2BL to avoid confusion with the second Australian radio station, 2FC. Over the next few years, radio stations began in most Australian capital cities and in some country towns.

After initial confusion about how Australian stations would be licensed, Australia established two systems of broadcasting: commercial and national. Commercial stations raised their income from advertising. In July 1932, the Australian government took a momentous step when it set up a national broadcaster. Originally called the Australian Broadcasting Commission, and now the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the ABC), it was based on the British Broadcasting Commission, which started broadcasting in 1923. At the time, income for ABC stations was raised from radio licences that had to be bought by every household that owned a radio. Later the licensing system was scrapped and the ABC came to derive its income solely from federal government budget allocation. Since its inception, the ABC has played an important social and cultural role and is embedded in Australian society, even though it is often a source of controversy.

#Radio: The wireless transmission through air of electromagnetic waves, and the device designed to collect these signals and turn them into sound that you can listen to.

#Antenna: The device used to send or receive electromagnetic signals; a crucial part of radio broadcasting.

LICENCE FEES

Everyone in the UK who watches or records television programs at the same time as they are shown on television must pay a broadcast licence fee (BBC). This includes televisions, computers, mobile phones, games consoles, digital boxes and DVD/VHS recorders. At present in the UK, the fee is the equivalent of about \$250 every year. Australia did away with the radio licence fee in 1948, and the ABC has ever since been funded from a government appropriation. In 1985, then Communications Minister Michael Duffy in the Hawke Labor government put forward reinstated licences as one option when reviewing funding arrangements for the ABC (National Archives of Australia n.d.). The idea was rejected in favour of more efficient management processes and planning.

The three decades from the early 1930s are often referred to as the golden years of radio, when it was a familiar and much-loved fixture in most family homes and the source of information and entertainment in the majority of Western countries, Australia predominant among them. During those years, radio featured many types of entertainment that can now be found on television, such as drama, documentary and concerts. The years of the Second World War, 1939 to 1945, reinforced the importance of radio. In September 1939, most Australians heard that Australia was at war with Germany via the famous broadcast by Robert Menzies, then prime minister, a broadcast that still has the power to evoke memories of a long-departed era. The words on the page don't do justice to the unadorned eloquence of the recorded voice. Find a recording on the internet and hear the tribal drum resonate through this famous piece of radio.

Transcript of the first minute of Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies' declaration of war

Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that in consequence of a persistence by Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her and that, as a result, Australia is also at war. No harder task can fall to the lot of a democratic leader than to make such an announcement. Great Britain and France with the cooperation of the British Dominions have struggled to avoid this tragedy. They have, as I firmly believe, been patient. They have kept the door of negotiation open. They have given no cause for aggression. But in the result their efforts have failed and we are therefore, as a great family of nations, involved in a struggle which we must at all costs win and which we believe in our hearts we will win.

Robert Menzies, 3 September 1939

The War of the Worlds

Media students should also listen to the milestone in early radio, *The War of the Worlds*, a radio drama that was broadcast throughout the USA from New York on Halloween Eve, 30 October 1938. Recordings are readily available to download from the internet. Listen in as this most famous—and

infamous—of radio shows weaves its magic, even now. This amazing radio play was a memorable use of a still relatively new medium.

The War of the Worlds was created by a brilliant young actor, Orson Welles, aged only 23 but already with a sonorous voice and a hefty reputation as a stage and radio actor and entrepreneur. He introduced a daring new style of broadcast that had consequences not even the highly imaginative Welles could have predicted. *The War of the Worlds* radio show, which lasted just one hour, has gone down in history as the moment that the power of radio was first felt to its full extent. The show had a remarkable effect on its audience: thousands of people called the police, jamming switchboards, and many people reported seeing the destruction wrought by the Martians. It seems incredible now that so obviously a fictional piece, based upon a well-known piece of literature by a noted author, H.G. Wells, could have this effect. The exact extent of the panic generated has, interestingly, become more controversial in recent times, with some scholars disputing aspects of the story. Pooley and Socolow (2013), for example, maintain that many of the claims of people taking to the streets and trying to flee New York are largely mythical, bolstered by a newspaper industry anxious to discredit the relatively new medium of radio. The reality of the scale of the effect of this broadcast is rather lost in time. The fact remains, though, that the broadcast did induce belief of the reality of an invasion in a significant number of people who tuned into that show, and many of them acted upon it by calling the police.

This broadcast was made less than a year before the Second World War broke out in Europe, and the program tapped into a prevailing sense of unease. People tuning in late to the program heard what sounded like a plausible real-time unfolding of events, with news flashes breaking into the usual radio fare of band music, followed by what seemed to be a live cross to a reporter at the scene of a spacecraft landed in a farmer's field. The subsequent apparent death of the reporter and the bystanders sounded realistic to the listeners.

Paul Heyer (2003) looks afresh at this amazing milestone in the development of radio, showing how Welles summoned all the powers of 'the theatre of the imagination', as Welles called radio. Heyer describes how Welles deliberately exploited radio's characteristics of immediacy and spontaneity to convince large numbers of people that the Earth was being invaded by aliens from Mars. He was so successful, and apparently frightened so many people, that Welles was taken in for questioning by the police.

The effect was amplified by the fact that many people tuned to the show late, after switching from the highly popular program *The Chase and Sanborn Hour* on NBC, featuring the ventriloquist Edgar Bergen (Heyer 2003). They therefore missed the part where the audience was told that the broadcast was based upon the H.G. Wells fictional classic. Although at the end of the broadcast Welles told the audience that *The War of the Worlds* had been a big Halloween trick, by then a number of New Yorkers had picked up their telephones to call the police. The broadcast had far-reaching consequences, leading academics to study radio as a unique communication phenomenon for the first time.

The McLuhan interpretation

In 1964, pioneering Canadian media theorist Marshall McLuhan published *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, which used the Welles broadcast to help elucidate how radio operated—how it gets into our heads. McLuhan wrote, in his typically colourful prose, that radio was a tribal

drum and that it had a power to ‘involve people in depth’. ‘Radio affects most people intimately, person-to-person, offering a world of unspoken communication between writer–speaker and the listener’ (McLuhan 1967). He was concerned to distinguish between the effects of different media, and famously called radio a ‘hot’ medium, in contrast to television, which was ‘cool’. The terms ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ are intended to draw distinctions between the levels of participation in various media. At the time that this analytical approach was formulated (that is, the early 1960s), audience participation—such as talkback radio, listener polling or competitions that required listeners to phone in—was not prevalent in the USA, and rare in Australia.

The McLuhan interpretation is frequently misunderstood, mainly because it employs terminology (‘hot’ and ‘cool’) that seems unrelated to meaning. Perhaps the simplest interpretation is that radio requires little direct participation and may be absorbed while a person is doing other things. This feature of radio contrasts with television (and various other media), the ‘cool’ media, which tend to engage more than one sensory perception, and so require more direct attention. Radio is an altogether more intimate, inward experience. This made listening to the radio an essentially different experience from watching television or using a telephone.

Further, McLuhan maintained that Welles used ‘the auditory involving power of radio to tap primal fears and emotions—anticipating what Hitler was about to do in reality’ (Heyer 2003). McLuhan used *The War of the Worlds* broadcast to illustrate his point that ‘the subliminal depths of radio are charged with the resonating echoes of tribal horns and antique drums’; in other words, that radio has a deeply evocative capacity. A population already primed by fear caused by the rise of Hitler could very easily be prompted to believe in an alien attack. Any medium that can do this must have tremendous power. As McLuhan said, ‘The famous Orson Welles broadcast about the invasion from Mars was a simple demonstration of the all-inclusive, completely involving scope of the auditory image of radio. It was Hitler who gave radio the Orson Welles treatment for real’ (McLuhan 1967).

A UNIQUE PLACE

Radio occupies a unique place in modern mass communication. In many ways, it is mass communication at its most simple and basic. This, perhaps paradoxically, gives it its special power. Radio engages one sensory perception only, which happens to be the most fleeting of human perceptions: hearing. It’s always in the now. Newspapers are more lasting, even if they only last a day. Television imprints visual images on our memories that may stay there for years. Not so radio. More than any other form of mass communication, radio engages human imagination. For this, and many other reasons, it did not disappear when television rose to its gargantuan proportions. At the time, many people said that radio had had its brief and shining moment and that it would die out, but that has not happened yet. As Australian scholar Maura Edmond put it, ‘television helped radio to define and redefine itself, by forcing it to adapt to a changed domestic entertainment landscape and helping to underscore what was so particular about radio’ (Edmond 2014). Now, as radio is challenged by new forms of communication, particularly online, it is reshaping itself in the same way

that it did with the advent of television. But as consumers increasingly tune into radio-on-demand, podcasts and mobile apps, the essential character of radio is still sought after, still relevant. The one-on-one intimacy of radio still engages: 'For emerging forms of expanded radio, characteristics routinely associated with the medium of radio—authenticity, intimacy, immediacy, interactivity, domesticity, community—have taken on renewed significance' (Edmond 2014).

Before radio, access to information was largely confined to the literate. This meant that the educated minority controlled the flow of information to the uneducated masses. Knowledge, as the English philosopher Francis Bacon famously noted, is power, and literacy itself has always been a method of exerting social control. So it is not surprising that in the 20th century, during a period of great social upheaval, sources of information were wrenched from the hands of existing elite groups and put into different hands, whether into those of another kind of elite or even into the hands of less powerful groups in the population. Where power had once been held by, for example, the monarchy, the aristocracy and the clergy, now new power groups were emerging. These included those who had access to the airwaves, such as media owners or public relations practitioners—those who were able to use emerging media power to speak directly to the people. And if people could be reached, they could be swayed. The advent of radio marked a change in how power groups operate, with calculations about mass appeal suddenly becoming possible once the first radio transmitters were switched on. That's not to say that information was necessarily democratised, but it did become possible to reach and mobilise more people than ever before, including those who could not read.

Radio all over again: *Serial*



One of the most striking developments in radio in recent years has also tended to emphasise its timeless and unique qualities. The podcast called *Serial*, which debuted in October 2014, has become a phenomenon, grabbing people by the throat and holding them. This was simple journalistic storytelling, stripped back to its radio essentials. The series is a spinoff of the hugely successful US radio show *This American Life*, hosted by Ira Glass. *Serial* was presented by Sarah Koenig and was co-created and is co-produced by Koenig and Julie Snyder, both producers of *This American Life*.

The first series of *Serial* told the story of a murder. Here's the way its 12-episode podcast was introduced on the website [<http://serialpodcast.org>]:

It's Baltimore, 1999. Hae Min Lee, a popular high-school senior, disappears after school one day. Six weeks later detectives arrest her classmate and ex-boyfriend, Adnan Syed, for her murder. He says he's innocent—though he can't exactly remember what he was doing on that January afternoon. But someone can. A classmate at Woodlawn High School says she knows where Adnan was. The trouble is, she's nowhere to be found.

And so begins the telling of a gripping piece of investigative journalism. Episodes were released every week, to an increasingly eager audience.

Serial is evidence that radio has colonised some parts of new media simply by doing what it does best: providing compelling journalistic audio. As Ira Glass put it, 'We want to give you the same experience you get from a great HBO or Netflix series, where you get caught up with the characters and the thing unfolds week after week, but with a true story, and no pictures. Like *House of Cards*, but you can enjoy it while you're driving' (Laurie 2014). In other words, a perfect example of McLuhan's 'hot' medium, allowing people to enjoy storytelling while engaged in other activities.

RADIO AND THE DEVELOPING WORLD

In places where illiteracy rates are high and access to other forms of communication is low, radio has a huge social and economic role to play. In some places, radio is the only means for disseminating information to large groups. For example, small-scale farmers in many African countries rely upon community-based radio stations for information on developing their skills, finding out essential information about crop diseases or weather conditions, and receiving practical advice on sustainable agricultural practices that can help ensure their livelihoods. Farm Radio International works with radio stations in many African countries to support the essential resources only radio can provide. On its website (www.farmradio.org), Farm Radio International says, 'Radio can reach communities at the very end of the development road—people who live in areas with no phones and no electricity. Radio reaches people who can't read or write. Even in very poor communities, radio penetration is vast. There are more than 800 million radios in developing countries. An average of one in ten people has a radio.'

The advent of simple and cheap mass communication has had a wide range of implications. In totalitarian and authoritarian states, for example, radio is always a state-controlled entity with enormous propaganda power. Propaganda on a mass scale began as a 20th-century phenomenon. While radio in itself is ethically neutral, the way it has been used by power groups has given it moral content. In a military coup or a revolution the leaders will quickly take control of the radio stations. This is not because military leaders want to become broadcast stars, but because they want their message to reach the vast majority of people. In many countries, the only way to do this is via the radio.

George Orwell, who fought on the anti-Franco side during the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s, wrote eloquently in his book *Homage to Catalonia* (1938) about what happened in Barcelona during the factional infighting on his own side—the capture of the radio station symbolised the supremacy of a particular faction. In more recent times, a successful coup (in Thailand, for example) is always heralded by a sudden change in radio programming as a particular military commander and his troops take control of the radio stations. Access to the airwaves signals victory.

THE INTIMACY OF RADIO

Another key characteristic of radio is its intimacy. When you listen to an interview on radio, it is intrinsically different from watching the same interview on television. This has to do not only with sensory perception but also the mirage of apparent closeness to the two or more people engaged in the discourse. When you watch television, on some level you are well aware of the unnaturalness of the medium and your mind automatically compensates. For one thing, the people are a fraction of normal size in most cases, unless the camera has zoomed in to extreme close-up.

When you listen to a radio interview, it almost feels as if you are the third person in the conversation. This illusion is heightened by the fact that you can take the radio with you to your place of work, to the beach or to sporting events. When it was introduced, the portable miniature television was supposed to fulfil the same function, but it has never really become popular. Perhaps this is because television tends to create a sense of being part of a wider, less personal community, while radio reinforces a sense of community intimacy. The rise in Australia of community radio since the 1970s is testament to the medium's community-building capacity, and is one positive exploitation of this special characteristic.

Opinion making has become an important feature of much radio in Australia. Some **talkback radio** personalities have demonstrable influence on political and social policy, again through this ability of radio to create a sense of a community. Whether these communities exist mainly to satisfy the station's ratings and the talkback person's ego, rather than contribute to informed debate, is an ongoing subject for discussion in this country. However, there is no denying the power wielded by the most popular talkback broadcasters. Alan Jones, still one of the highest-rating talkback broadcasters in Australia after many years on the air, attempted to impose the talkback model on television during the 1990s. He even placed an old-fashioned radio microphone on his desk. It simply did not work: the medium was wrong for this kind of community creation. When the program failed, many commentators also repeated the oft-quoted maxim that Jones had a 'very good face for radio'.

#Talkback radio: Radio programming that includes telephone conversations with members of the audience.

Other powerful uses of radio

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, and later during the US involvement in the Second World War, President Franklin Roosevelt used radio to broadcast 'fireside chats', during which his audiences felt that he directly spoke to each of them. He broadcast 31 of these radio addresses, ranging from 15 to 45 minutes, during some of the most tumultuous times his country had experienced. These fireside chats became compulsive listening for large numbers of Americans—and a significant factor in the domestic propaganda effort. Here was the president actually speaking to individuals in their own homes, at a time when radio was still relatively new as a form of mass communication.

Other uses of radio as a propaganda mechanism include Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty (in Cuba), Radio Free Asia and the more recent Radio Free Afghanistan and Radio Free Iraq, all

of which have been used to support US policies in strategically important areas. The propaganda possibilities of radio first became important during the Second World War, when the Nazis broadcast to Britain the messages of 'Lord Haw Haw', whose real name was William Joyce. During the same war, the Japanese sent out broadcasts by Tokyo Rose, and in the Vietnam War, Hanoi Hannah broadcast from North Vietnam.

RADIO, PROPAGANDA AND WAR

Lord Haw Haw, aka William Joyce

William Joyce was born in the USA to British parents and travelled on a British passport. Before the Second World War, he was a member of the notorious British Union of Fascists, led by Oswald Mosley. Using his pronounced British accent, Joyce broadcast Nazi propaganda in English to Allied troops throughout the conflict. When the war was over, he was hanged for treason by the British, a controversial act since Joyce was still an American (despite holding a British passport) and no US court had condemned Second World War propagandists.

Tokyo Rose

Tokyo Rose was not one single person but a range of young women. The person most associated with this identity, however, was a Japanese-American woman called Iva Ikuko Toguri, who claimed to have been stranded in Japan just before the Pearl Harbor bombing in December 1941 that brought the USA into the war. Toguri died in 2006, aged about ninety-eight. She was reportedly much less enthusiastic about her propaganda role than was Lord Haw Haw about his, and was forced into broadcasting. Toguri is believed to have subverted her broadcasts by incorporating scripts actually written by Allied prisoners of war. She used the on-air name of 'Orphan Ann', but was known to the Allies as Tokyo Rose. She was convicted of treason after the war, but was pardoned in 1977 by US President Gerald Ford.

Veteran Australian broadcaster Phillip Adams often refers to 'the listener' (in the singular) during his nightly show *Late Night Live* on ABC Radio National. He is highlighting the fact that the radio announcer effectively is talking to just one person—each person receiving the message is the only one being spoken to at any given moment. As we have seen, this ability to speak directly to people has been harnessed for both noble and dubious reasons throughout the history of the medium.

Not 'television without pictures'

Radio is not television without pictures. As McLuhan (1967) identified, all the media operate in distinctly different ways, providing specific sensory input. Therefore, information from the radio is processed in the human mind differently from information presented via television or newspapers.

While we are listening to radio, the visual cues we are used to in everyday life and in other media are not in play. Body language is not an issue on radio, so listeners have to use other clues to decide how to assess the information they are receiving. The sort of accusatory, aggressive or coquettish body language that you might find displayed by television interviewers cannot be discerned so

easily on radio. Interviewers can't stab the air with their pen or lean forward menacingly to make a point about where they stand on an issue. A radio interview may still be tough and demanding, and the interviewer can interrupt the flow of a person's answers, but the medium cannot convey the visual cues that give the interviewer the status of equal participant in a drama. Therefore, the radio experience is seen by many—rightly or wrongly—to be more detached than the television experience.

All considerations about a person's appearance—something that dominates nearly all other media—are not an issue in radio. This lack of the ability to make visual judgments can have something of a democratising effect, in that it removes discrimination on the basis of appearance. Conversely, the fact that listeners cannot see a person's eyes might detract from the ability to determine whether the person speaking is telling the truth.

Interviewees on the whole tend to be less nervous and more voluble on radio than they are on television. Someone being interviewed on television is acutely aware of a camera being pointed at them. On radio, the apparatus is less intrusive. Once they get over their initial reserve, most radio interviewees are able to forget about the recording equipment. It is less easy to ignore a television camera.

The imaginative dimension of radio brought with it the possibility of artifice. An early and famous example of this is the 'broadcast' of 1930s test cricket matches being played in England to audiences in Australia. The technology of the 1930s did not enable broadcast of the actual voices of the commentators from the British cricket grounds. The match description was sent in code by telegraph. The illusion of real time was achieved by the commentator improvising live commentary using the telegraphed match description. A technician or the commentator himself added sound effects; for example, knocking a pencil onto wood to sound like a bat hitting a cricket ball and using recordings of cheering crowds. Cricket enthusiasts in Australia were glued to their wirelesses, and imagined every ball of the match. It is easy to understand why these broadcasts were popular, and why such an illusion could work only on radio.

During the 1950s, the celebrated British program *The Goon Show* used a bizarre and diverse range of sound effects; in fact, the show was a pioneer in this technical field of expertise. The special effects staff perfected the sound of a custard hitting someone in the face or just about anything exploding. To the generation of people who listened to the Goons, their surreal antics had their own reality. Members of the radio audience *saw* the characters Neddy Seagoon, Bloodnok or Eccles in their imagination. During the 1960s and 1970s, Spike Milligan, one of the Goons, attempted to bring some of this same madness to television with a series called *Q*, but it only started to succeed when he abandoned radio techniques and adapted his ideas to television by inventing original visual effects. Also during the early 1970s, the Monty Python team, the natural successors to the Goons, were visual from the start. While still retaining the surreal mood of the Goons, they were able to carve a place for themselves on television.

Situation comedy and drama were staple programs on radio for quite a while, but they almost disappeared from radio after the introduction of television to Australia in 1956. However, radio continues to meet demands from youth for music, and from older listeners for information: news, current affairs and documentaries. At present, most people remain habituated to radio, although they increasingly complement their radio listening with self-compiled playlists or other forms of

podcast (see the earlier discussion of *Serial*) or mobile app. Radio has always had to adapt to keep up with changes in tastes and demands.

Nonetheless, some traditional uses of radio have maintained their popularity. For example, many people choose to listen to football and cricket commentary on radio rather than watching the television coverage because it gives their minds material for imagination or simply because it is a more convenient way to enjoy coverage of sport in a variety of settings or on the move. Additionally, radio stations often inspire great loyalty, with listeners staying tuned exclusively to particular outlets throughout lengthy periods of their lives.

Since the 1950s, radio has also been a major force in the rise of the youth culture. During the 1950s and early 1960s, rock'n'roll music became a form of mass entertainment largely because radio took up this music enthusiastically, often playing music that was seen by the prevailing conservative culture as subversive. Bob Dylan, considered by many to be the most influential songwriter of the second half of the 20th century, has often been quoted as saying that he spent his youth during the 1950s listening to the great rock'n'roll and blues musicians on the radio, and this shaped his musical idiom.

A case could be made that radio has actually become more conservative and less daring in musical matters in recent times, and this is one area where the visual senses have become dominant in what was once firmly an aural domain. Now popular, youth-orientated music doesn't get far without a striking video clip on one of the many television-based music programs or channels, or on YouTube, and radio programmers (with some notable exceptions) feel obliged to follow rather than lead in these matters. In fact, the visual imperative has clearly become more important than the music itself in many cases. But once that popular song has won acceptance for its visual imagery, it will be played on the radio stations, sometimes ad nauseam.

THE FUTURE IS HERE

Radio has reached several crossroads since its inception. One of these was presaged by the arrival of digital technology. Radio newsrooms started switching from analogue to digital equipment in the 1990s, initially reflecting the evolution in recording technology. This technology saw the demise of the old reel-to-reel recorders and editing machines to embrace less cumbersome digital recording and editing devices. Digital recording technology was followed by a revolution in transmission technology, making possible digital broadcasting. This new era of digital transmission (which has its parallel in the move from analogue to digital television) that began in 2009 has been embraced by a number of Australian radio outlets, particularly the ABC. To listen to ABC digital channels such as Dig Music or ABC Jazz (which are also streamed online), consumers may purchase a digital radio receiver that they can use in much the same way as old-style receivers—that is, they are small, portable units—but they do not tune in to the old AM or FM frequencies. Instead, listeners locate their station by name on the receiver. In fact, digital broadcast uses quite different technology that also enables pause, rewind and storage functions on the receivers, which are known as DAB+ receivers. DAB stands for digital audio broadcasting and DAB+ is the digital radio technology standard for Australia. This system enables sound to be converted to a digital

signal for transmission, then decoded in the receiver. The result is much clearer sound without the sort of interference that analogue signals can experience. At present, digital radio is only available in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra, although other cities and regions will follow soon. Digital radio, like analogue, is free to air and available to anyone in the broadcast range who has the right receiver.

Jolly (2008), in a parliamentary report on the advent of digital radio in Australia, says: ‘Some have labelled the improvements over AM and FM radio broadcasting that digital radio can deliver as “electrifying”.’ While this assessment is overly enthusiastic ... there appears to be general agreement that digital radio has the potential generally to provide an improved listening experience for audiences.’ In fact, digital radio has not moved ahead quite as rapidly as it was expected to, partly because until recently new cars were not being sold with digital receivers. During 2014, the number of vehicle manufacturers including digital receivers in new cars doubled (Commercial Radio Australia 2014). That shift in the vehicle manufacturing industry is giving digital radio the boost it needs, and its rise is expected to accelerate as a direct result.

DIGITAL RADIO UPTAKE IN AUSTRALIA

The fifth annual *Digital Radio Report*, prepared by Commercial Radio Australia in 2014, charts the progress of digital radio since its launch in 2009. The report shows that in 2014 nearly 25 per cent of Australian households had access to digital radio—well below access to analogue, but still a healthy proportion. Unlike the switch from analogue to digital television that occurred between 2010 and 2013, there is no end date for analogue radio, so there is no deadline driving the rise of digital radio.

Some of the main points of the 2014 report were:

- Nearly 2.8 million people or more than 21 per cent of people in the five major Australian capital cities listened to DAB+ digital radio each week, nearly 1.2 million (or 76 per cent) more listeners than in 2013
- A million more people were listening to radio via DAB+ digital radio than listening via the internet
- The number of DAB+ digital radios sold rose steadily, with nearly 1.7 million units sold since 2009
- Over 23 per cent of Australian households now have access to digital radio
- Almost 100,000 new vehicles have been sold with digital radio built in and 16 vehicle manufacturers now include digital radio as either standard or an option in Australia
- 26 vehicle manufacturers internationally sell cars containing digital radio.

Source: Commercial Radio Australia [2004].

Radio greatly increased its accessibility when some stations began using the power and reach of the internet about 15 years ago. Now, the new digital channels can be accessed there, too. When radio stations stream on the internet, they are using a different delivery system again, specially developed for the internet rather than for broadcasting on the airwaves. Wherever a personal computer is connected to the internet, web radio is readily accessible. It is now possible to listen to radio from around the world via the internet, and for many this not only offers diversity but also offers convenience, as they can have the radio playing while they are doing other work on their computers—another way they are honouring the McLuhan interpretation.



CONCLUSION

Radio does have a distinct and continuing role in mass communication. The medium's essential simplicity, identified by McLuhan and others, has given it the capacity to adapt effectively to the new technologies that could potentially have challenged its position on the communication spectrum. New technology is gathering pace, and soon we may get all our information from a multimedia system of some kind. For the moment, though, radio remains popular and ubiquitous. Its unique capacity to involve people emotionally—even as they are doing other things and going about their lives—gives it an enduring quality. Radio is an important part of most people's soundscape. It is the grandfather of mass entertainment, news and information, and creates a community that other forms of digital audio content cannot yet replace. To study radio, you have to approach it quite differently from both print and television. It is unique. People who choose a career in radio soon face the reality of dealing with sound alone—no other sensory perception—and that dictates everything they do, whether they write news for the hourly bulletins or craft a story through documentaries or drama. The tribal drum still beats.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Media theorist Marshall McLuhan called radio a ‘tribal drum’ that turns society into a ‘single echo chamber’ and was more buried in our psyche than any other medium.
- Despite changes to radio technology, such as the advent of digital recording and transmission equipment, the medium itself has not changed much since its inception.
- Radio began early in the 20th century, based on fundamental physics research, in particular basic investigations into electricity and electromagnetism.
- Australia has three main kinds of radio system: commercial, public and community.
- The three decades from the early 1930s were the ‘golden years of radio’, when it was a familiar and much-loved fixture in most family homes and the source of information and entertainment in most Western countries.
- A milestone in early radio, *The War of the Worlds* radio drama broadcast from New York on Halloween Eve, 30 October 1938, first showed the power of the medium.
- Radio occupies a unique place in modern mass communication and many ways it is mass communication at its most simple and basic.
- Radio engages one sensory perception only, the most fleeting of human perceptions: hearing.
- Before radio, access to information was largely confined to the literate, and the educated minority controlled the flow of information to the uneducated masses.
- In places where illiteracy rates are high and access to other forms of communication is low, radio has a huge social and economic role to play.
- Another key characteristic of radio is its intimacy; listening to an interview on radio is intrinsically different to watching the same interview on television.
- Radio has long had a role in propaganda, including during major conflicts such as the Second World War and the recent wars in the Middle East.
- The particular characteristics of radio enabled artifice, such as the test cricket broadcasts in Australia during the 1930s, and also the need to develop the skills of sound effects such as those that made *The Goon Show* so vivid.
- Digital radio stations are rising as digital radio transmission becomes more broadly available.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What were the scientific foundations of radio?
- 2 What is the significance of the creation of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932?
- 3 Why does radio especially engage human imagination?
- 4 Why is radio such an intimate medium?
- 5 What is the difference between analogue and digital radio?
- 6 Write brief (500-word) reflections on the following questions:

- a Why did Marshall McLuhan describe radio as a 'hot' medium? How is it intrinsically different to the 'cool' medium of television?
- b Why does radio have a disproportionately large impact in developing countries? Include a relevant country as a case study.
- c Why and how is Australia's 'public broadcaster', the ABC, intrinsically different from commercial radio networks?
- d Examine the rise and importance of community radio in Australia. What was the philosophy behind the development of community radio, and has it changed in any ways since its inception?

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6

FILM: THE SEVENTH ART

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

Film is one of the very few media forms to be referred to as 'art'. Structurally, the comparison seems appropriate: what is film, after all, but a complex series of images framed on a wall? And who has not been moved by a film in the same way that one can be moved by a painting? From a baby's pram rolling out of control down the Odessa steps, to a door quietly closing between a Mafia don and his wife, to a Dark Lord reaching out to his enemy and telling him that 'I am your father', film images haunt us long after the films they belong to have run their course.

Film is also an industrial product: the product of writers, directors, producers, studios and art departments, among many others. Just look at the list of credits at the end of almost any film and it becomes quite clear that, unlike a painting which is usually the product of a single artist, films are massive industrial productions manufactured by vast numbers of people. How then can we reconcile these ideas? And where does film sit in the larger mediasphere?

While it seems logical that film would be part of a book on media studies, at the same time it is always slightly removed from the other media industries. In terms of its study as an art form, it is regularly subsumed into literary studies courses. For many years, too, its reception differed in that films were viewed in a

cinema, as opposed to the domestic spaces of online, television, radio or print media. But of course films can, and regularly are, viewed on televisions, tablets and online. Film has been implicated in convergence (the coming together of what were once separate media texts and industries; see Chapter 19) almost from its inception. It is also film that provides us with a vocabulary for analysing moving and still images.

In this chapter we look at:

- a history of the film industry
- the domination of Hollywood
- approaches to studying film
- the impact of technology on film.

WHAT IS FILM?

When people talk about film they often refer to ‘motion pictures’ or ‘flicks’. Both terms are important because they point to what makes film such a unique media form: motion (or, to be more precise, the appearance of motion—hence the word ‘movie’). Indeed, this is how we would now define film: a series of still images providing the illusion of motion. Since at least the 2010s, films overwhelmingly have not even been captured on film (photographic) stock, but rather as digital images captured by digital cameras. Structurally, however, a film remains a series of still images called *frames*. When members of an audience watch a film, their eyes are tricked into seeing a series of static images as a single unbroken and continuous movement.

FLICKS

The term ‘motion pictures’ is pretty straightforward (films are a series of pictures that provide the illusion of motion), but ‘flicks’ is a little more obscure. It relates to this idea of critical flicker fusion. Early silent films were shot at sixteen to twenty frames per second and the light was broken only once per image, leaving the films with a pronounced flicker, which led to the slang term ‘flickers’ or ‘flicks’.

Most films are shot and projected at twenty-four still frames per second, with the light being broken twice—once when a new image appears and again while it is held in place—which has the effect of projecting each frame onto the screen twice. This creates the illusion of continuous motion, thanks to our neural and cognitive processes misperceiving what we are actually being shown.

Why does this happen? A number of overlapping theories have been put forward, including:

- *persistence of vision* (known to the ancient Egyptians and scientifically described in 1824 by Peter Mark Roget), which maintains that the brain retains images on the retina for one-twentieth to one-fifth of a second longer than when they are first shown
- *the phi phenomenon* (or the *stroboscopic effect*, discovered in 1912 by psychologist Max Wertheimer), whereby a spinning colour wheel or the blades of a fan are perceived as being one circular form and/or colour
- *apparent motion*, by which rapid changes to a visual display can fool our eyes into seeing movement; for example, a girl jumping rope in a flashing neon sign

- *critical flicker fusion*, whereby flashes of light (at around fifty frames per second) are perceived as a continuous beam of light.

The crucial thing to remember is that film offers us the illusion of movement. As you will read in Chapters 9 and 10, all media forms are mediations of reality; that is, they all represent reality, whether in sound or words or images. An added part of film's representation, then, is this illusion of movement. It is an illusion that depends very much on technological development and it is this often antagonistic relationship between film and technology that will become a feature of our discussion below.

Inception



For more on the relationship between film and illusion, look at Christopher Nolan's 2010 film *Inception*, which tells the story of a corporate espionage thief, Dom Cobb (Leonardo DiCaprio), who extracts information from the unconscious minds of others while they are sleeping. In many respects, the film is a meditation on the nature of filmmaking itself: the levels of dreaming Cobb and his team work through echo various film genres (see below) and a central question throughout is whether something is reality or fantasy. Has the dream ended? Does it even matter? This, more than anything else, seems to be the secret of a film's success—whether it does or does not provide an illusion you are completely immersed in.

A BRIEF EVOLUTION OF FILM

As we have seen, the development of media is marked by a series of technological developments, and film is no exception. Like radio, it began as a scientific exploration—of why we perceive continuous movement from a series of still images—by inventors such as Joseph Plateau and William George Horner. It may have remained that way had not technology and a series of shrewd businessmen stepped in to turn it into an entertainment.

The early-19th-century ancestors of film were optical toys such as the thaumatrope, a child's toy paper disc with strings that could be spun to simulate movement between the two images printed on either side of the disc. Later, patrons of arcades and fairgrounds paid money to look at more sophisticated toys, such as the phenakistoscope in 1832, the zoetrope in 1834 (both machines spun their images on strips of paper in rotating drums) and the mutoscope, which created movement by flipping cards in front of a peephole. But all of these devices could only *simulate* movement—they couldn't actually *record* movement as it occurred.

This fell to Anglo-American photographer Eadweard Muybridge, who recorded the movement of a horse with twelve separate cameras to create a type of 'series photography'. Other pioneers, such as the American W.D.L. Dickson, refined and developed this equipment, which led to the production of the Edison Laboratories motion-picture camera of 1892: the kinetograph.

Such devices were exhibited in the same arcades and fairgrounds that had been home to the phenakistoscope and zoetrope, but the mass commercial appeal of film remained unappreciated. Thomas Edison had first run 50 feet of film in 1888, but he mistakenly believed moving pictures

should be individually exhibited via a coin-operated kinoscope (in 1894). After much trial and error, French inventor and businessman Louis Lumière, and his brother Auguste, became the first to capitalise on the mass commercial appeal of film. They perfected the cinematographe—a machine that served as camera, film printer and projector—so the moving images could be projected onto a screen, to be enjoyed by an audience rather than an individual person, all from a machine that weighed only 6 kilograms and remained small and portable. From this cinematographe machine comes the term **cinematography**, which refers to the whole industrial process of shooting, manipulating and developing film.

Cinematography: The industrial process of shooting, manipulating and developing film.

On 22 March 1895, the Lumière brothers projected a moving film titled *La Sortie des ouvriers de l'usine Lumière* (*Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*) to a private Parisian audience. The commercial possibilities of film were finally realised on 28 December, when the Lumières projected a program of about ten films to a paying audience at the Grand Café on the Boulevard Capucines in Paris; film had become a mass medium and a potentially lucrative commercial venture. This prompted Edison to respond with his own film projection system, the vitascope, often showing films that were illegally copied from the Lumières' catalogue. Many imitators followed.

The next major development—the addition of narrative structure rather than the mere recording of scenes—came from a magician, George Méliès. Méliès began producing films in 1896, inventing a range of special effects (optical tricks involving framing and sets; see below) and technical conventions (such as the fade-in, dissolve and fade-out; also see below), following a happy accident in which his camera jammed and the bus he was filming was replaced by a hearse. Importantly, Méliès was the first filmmaker to realise the possibilities that film editing contained for manipulating real time and space: that crucial distinction between screen time (where events can be compressed and not everything has to be recorded) and real time (what you are currently experiencing as you read this chapter). This culminated in his (and perhaps the genre's first) science fiction film: *Le Voyage dans la lune* (*A Trip to the Moon*) (1902), with its famous image of a rocket in the eye of the moon. You can still find most of Méliès' films online and his productions are beautifully realised in Martin Scorsese's 2011 film *Hugo*.

The film enjoyed wide international circulation, and within 10 years the narrative film was well on its way to dominating film output (with the first western, Edwin S. Porter's *The Great Train Robbery*, following shortly thereafter in 1903). The more complex and story-driven these films became, the more they began to attain respectability among the middle and upper classes. Filmgoing was no longer just a working-class pursuit; it was truly becoming an entertainment attractive to a mass audience, regardless of class and (increasingly) regardless of nation.

While the date of the first narrative film remains an ongoing source of debate (though in a burst of nationalistic pride, we would suggest Australia has the strongest case with *The Story of the Kelly Gang* in 1902), filmmaking continued to be dominated by the French. The Lumières sold their commercial interests to Charles Pathé in 1900, and his company, Pathé Frères, became the world's largest film producer, while France's Gaumont became the world's largest film studio.

The onset of the First World War curtailed production throughout Europe, affecting France, Italy (another major player in the nascent film industry), Germany and Britain. As Graeme Turner (2006) notes, this left the way clear for the US film industry to move into the European, Latin American and Japanese markets: 'American film exports rose from \$36 million in 1915 to \$159 million in 1916; by the end of the war the US was said to produce 85 per cent of the world's movies and 98 per cent of those shown in America' (Turner 2006: 14).

The USA's domination of film was maintained by three factors: aggressive **vertical integration** (of production, distribution and exhibition) at home and abroad (finally outlawed in the USA by the US Supreme Court in 1948), the Second World War's destabilisation of European cinema's growth (following the introduction of sound in countries where English was not the national language) and the rise in costs for film production and promotion.

As the single biggest film market in the world, the USA remains one of the few countries where local productions can recoup their costs without having to rely on foreign sales. By way of contrast, foreign-made films rarely achieve mainstream distribution in America, as they require the support of a major distributor whose films are already in competition with this foreign product. This means that for most people, in most countries of the world, when they think of film they still think of US film and, more specifically, Hollywood film.

WHAT IS HOLLYWOOD?

First, Hollywood is a place: a section of Los Angeles, California, that was, for many years, the centre of US film and television production (it replaced New York as the centre of film production). Second, it is a form of factory-style film production, almost a genre in its own right; by 1920 Hollywood was turning out almost 800 films a year, with contract actors and actresses swapped between studios like players on sporting teams. Third, and perhaps most importantly, it is a state of mind, a synonym for magic and glamour and an aspiration for actors and actresses all over the world. For more on Hollywood the place, see Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* and Robert Altman's *The Player*. For more on Hollywood the dream, see Garry Marshall's *Pretty Woman*. Where else but in Hollywood (diegetically and extradiegetically) could the tale of a wealthy businessman who breaks up companies and a prostitute hired to be his escort be turned into a romantic comedy with a happy ending? That's the Hollywood dream.

Why is Hollywood important?

Not only are Hollywood films still the bulk of films in circulation and consumption, particularly in English-speaking countries, but they also form the **mainstream** of film, against which independents and **film movements** often position themselves. An understanding of this mainstream is vital to understanding the innovation of these other forms and to understanding how ideas of genre, auteurs and film style (the various theoretical approaches to film) emerge in practice as well as theory.

Furthermore, given the dominance of US film internationally, the imprint of Hollywood can also be seen on a variety of international films; for example, Australia's deliberately derivative **10BA cycle of films** (such as *Razorback*), Italian 'spaghetti' westerns (such as *The Good, the Bad and the Ugly*), the French New Wave's hardboiled detective films (such as *Alphaville*) and Japanese *anime* (such as *Spirited Away*), all of which were influenced by Hollywood.

Similarly, Hollywood has absorbed international filmmaking practices and filmmakers into its own structure—think of the Hong Kong-style action films and Jackie Chan, the Chinese *wuxia* martial arts movies such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the J-cycle of Japanese horror film adaptations, or the adaptations of India's Bollywood style of films.

Most recently, Hollywood has aggressively pursued the second-biggest film-going public in the world: the Chinese. *Iron Man 3*, for example, had four additional minutes of content with Chinese actors and locations exclusively produced for its release in China, while *Transformers: Age of Extinction* was largely set in China, used Chinese actors, pushed Chinese products and held its world premiere in

#Vertical integration:

The ownership by one company of all levels of production in an industry; in the film industry, it was the combined production, distribution and exhibition of films in the USA before the 1950s.



#Mainstream: The most familiar, popular or otherwise generally available of any art form, especially film.

#Film movement:

A group of films loosely directed towards similar formal or social ends.

#10BA Cycle of Films:

A group of Australian films produced in the 1980s, assisted by the 10BA tax scheme, introduced in 1981, that provided generous tax relief for film investors. The films spanned a number of genres (horror, exploitation and action) and were particularly commercial, stylistically imitative of Hollywood and more focused on the US film market than providing any quintessential depictions of 'Australianness'.



Hong Kong. Both films boosted their international box office with record profits in China, with *Transformers: Age of Extinction* becoming the highest-grossing film in China's history.

THE STUDIO SYSTEM AND THE CREATION OF FILM GENRES

From 1915 to 1930, experimentation with film was steadily standardised and economised into what became known as the **studio system**, so that by the 1920s (following the example of Thomas Harper Ince and his trendsetting Inceville studios with its five self-contained shooting stages) the film industry was made up of great factories devoted to the large-scale production of film for a mass audience as a commercial undertaking.

What film studios set out to do was create events. As French critic and filmmaker Francois Truffaut noted, 'When a film achieves a certain success, it becomes a sociological event, and the question of its quality becomes secondary' (Truffaut 1977). This was partly because the industry was trying to reach a mass audience, and partly because people had to be attracted to see a film (increasingly in picture palaces, the forerunners of cinemas and multiplexes designed for the exhibition of film)—and what better attraction could there be than an event? These events were managed through the successful interplay of the film production itself (the film text), the distribution (and attendant opening night and star endorsements) and the exhibition and promotion (marketing).

In the creation of film we find the perfect example of **show business**. On the one hand, the artist (or artists: the filmmakers, designers and stars) try to develop film as the 'seventh art' (see below), relying on the narrative tropes and traditions of drama and literature (the show). On the other hand, the studios, producers and exhibitors promote the film as they would any form of mass entertainment, such as vaudeville or a fairground attraction, while always watching the bottom line (the profit result). Hollywood in particular was all about trying to negotiate this tension between the show and the business.

However, it was this mass audience for film that also helped build the studio system. Their attendance ensured that filmmaking could be a commercial enterprise, which encouraged the investment of bigger budgets and more complex filmmaking techniques, as well as determining which conventions and trends would be successful. The popularity of one story or particular form of cinematic expression would inspire repetition, so originality involved making something inventive to satisfy the audience's demand for novelty without alienating the audience by giving them something incomprehensibly new. This was the development of **film genres**, a culture designed to give audiences what they want: predictable demand for similar product.

The end of the studio system

By the end of the 1930s, the studio feature film was itself a genre. A night at the cinema (or movie theatre) was usually made up of a newsreel (giving you headlines and international news), a cartoon, a serial, a 'B' movie and then the featured attraction, the 'A' movie.

Until the 1970s, studio films were part of a much larger program of entertainment, much as a particular television series may become a part of a night's viewing. (In the days of silent film, until 1928, this was heightened by the fact that larger cinemas still supported film screenings with the vestiges of vaudeville: an orchestra might play or there might be some other live musical entertainment such as an organ player.)

While today we think of films being part of huge merchandising and composite commodity programs involving spin-offs, tie-ins and memorabilia—usually most associated with the blockbuster film—we can see that film has been an event-based form of entertainment for almost a century. Indeed, film had only become the feature attraction thanks to another advance in technology: the introduction of a soundtrack, which was pioneered in Warner Brothers's *The Jazz Singer* (1927), starring Al Jolson. This advance seems slightly ironic, given the fact that Edison had only experimented with film initially as an accompaniment to his sound machines. Jolson's line, famously recorded in *The Jazz Singer*, was: 'You ain't seen nothing yet.'

Singin' In the Rain



Improvements in film technology led to the development of a wholly original American genre of filmmaking: the musical. *Singin' in the Rain* was made several times before the most famous version starring Gene Kelly, Donald O'Connor and Debbie Reynolds was released in 1952. The musical as genre is exemplified in Gene Kelly's title song-and-dance performance of 'Singin' in the Rain' or Donald O'Connor's song-and-comedy act in 'Make 'em Laugh'. Musicals such as *Singin' in the Rain* combined a rigorous exploitation of new technological breakthroughs in sound with the old pre-movie conventions of vaudeville—the perfect balance between novelty and convention that studios and audiences demanded at the time.

By the 1930s, the big five major studios (or the majors; MGM, Paramount, Twentieth Century Fox, Warner Brothers and RKO) and several significant minors (such as Columbia, Universal and the semi-independent Republic, Monogram and United Artists) had consolidated their control over budgets, exhibition and distribution in the USA and throughout much of the rest of the world, as well as over the contracting of directors and stars and other filmmaking personnel. But less than a decade later the studio system started to fall apart.

The break-up of the studio system began with the US Supreme Court's 1948 Paramount decision, which forced the majors to sell their theatre chains, ending their vertical monopolies over exhibition. Then the developing power of celebrity (see Chapter 11) led to many stars and directors setting up their own productions, resulting in a loosening of the studio's control over the filmmaking personnel and a diminishing number of contract players. The arrival of television (see Chapter 7) also reduced audience numbers. By the end of the 1950s the studio system had come to an end.

So what became of the majors?



With the exception of RKO, the major companies of the 1920s and 1930s survived, changing hands as they became part of larger and larger conglomerates. In the 1960s, they became little more

than distributors for the new television and drive-in markets, and, later, distributors and financiers for independent production companies. Today's seven major studios—Disney, Paramount, Sony, Twentieth Century Fox, United Artists—MGM, Universal and Warner Brothers—have independent production arms and are closely linked to television (Disney, for example, owns the US ABC television network).

Censorship and the American New Wave

The United States Production Code of 1930 was a set of censorship guidelines governing the production of motion pictures in the USA. It spelt out what was and was not morally acceptable content for films produced for a public audience. Among its many provisions were the prohibition of nudity, 'sex perversion' (homosexuality) and the avoidance of 'excessive and lustful kissing'. Often referred to as the Hays Code, after the original head of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA), Will H. Hays, it was adopted by the MPAA in 1930, enforced in 1934 and abandoned in 1967 in favour of the more permissive MPAA ratings system, which ushered in a wave of pornographic films and other more confrontational films collectively referred to as the American New Wave.

Genres such as exploitation films and youth films flourished, and arthouse and adult cinemas opened in more locations. By the end of the 1970s, an alternative infrastructure of festivals had sprung up (for example, the Sundance Festival began as the US Film Festival in 1978) to support alternative productions. Platforms for showing films increased rapidly after the 1970s, from multiplex cinemas (buildings with a large number of small cinemas) to cable television stations such as HBO.

Hollywood increasingly derived its main income from **blockbuster films**, beginning with *Jaws* (1975) and *Star Wars* (1977). Such films incur enormous production costs, but can make far more money in a short time than films could during the entirety of their long runs in the 1940s. By contrast, the independent companies attempted to spend relatively small amounts on experimental productions that were still capable of large earnings. The first successful low-budget film was *Easy Rider* (1969). Others included Steven Soderbergh's *sex, lies, and videotape* (1989), which cost \$1.2 million to make but made \$24.7 million in its initial domestic release and had made over \$100 million by 2001.

Blockbuster film: A very costly film that a studio expects will make a profit as a result of the enormous amounts of money spent on publicity and wide distribution.

Star Wars

An important film in terms of convergence (see Chapter 19) and the science fiction genre, *Star Wars* (1977; later renamed *Star Wars: A New Hope* to distinguish it from the plethora of subsequent prequels and sequels) is also very much structured as a love letter to film itself. It uses elements of other film genres (and even other films) to create a new mythology that is surprisingly fresh but also strangely comforting. A supreme example of world building on a grand scale, the *Star Wars* franchise continues to wear its love for film proudly on its cybernetic arm (I'm looking at you Anakin) with episodes of its animated iteration, *Star Wars: Clone Wars*, paying tribute to westerns, Hitchcock, war films, samurai movies and Godzilla films.

The studio system had promoted the use of house styles, under which few but the most popular directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock and Billy Wilder, could retain their independence. The end of the studio system and the rise of the independents refocused attention not only on the individual

styles of these indie (independent) directors, but also on the directors and films made under the studio system. Who really were the authors of films: directors or studios? This tension underlies **auteur theory**.

Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

Arguably still the most famous director of all time, and an auteur in every sense of the word (he even indicated where he thought the editor should cut the film), Alfred Hitchcock understood that one of the real pleasures of film was its sense of voyeurism, of sitting in the dark and seeing something you were not meant to see. This was never better expressed than in his film *Rear Window*. In telling the tale of a wheelchair-bound photographer who suspects his neighbour may have murdered his wife, Hitchcock cannily predicts media interest in reality television (the windows of the apartments across the way are like a series of little television screens) and the increased desire for interactivity (Grace Kelly's character ultimately feels compelled to go across to the apartment under suspicion, with almost disastrous results).



WHY THE 'SEVENTH ART'?

The heading of this chapter, 'Film: the seventh art', is not just a cliché—many filmmakers, writers and critics place film alongside the six arts identified by the philosopher Hegel in the early 19th century (architecture, sculpture, painting, music, poetry and philosophy). Why then did film come to be regarded as the **seventh art**? As far back as 1915, the US Supreme Court ruled, among other things, that 'the exhibition of motion pictures is a business pure and simple, originated and conducted for profit'. Similarly, producers generally have been less interested in thinking of cinema as art, and more interested in selling, franchising, replicating and copying films to make money.

The idea that film could be art began with the filmmakers themselves, starting with Griffith and Méliès, who argued that filmmaking could be considered as an art form; however, it was the critics and the academics, especially during the 1960s, who seriously suggested that it should be so. Within fifteen years of its initial development, film was on its way to becoming the 20th century's first original art form: the seventh art, a new aesthetic form as important as painting or sculpture or literature.

In 1915, D.W. Griffith's epic *Birth of a Nation*, the longest feature made at that point in time, received great public and critical acclaim. In the same year, US poet Vachel Lindsay's *The Art of the Moving Picture* was released, equating film with high art. As such, film was the first media form to be taken up by academics as an artistic medium worthy of study. Since then approaches to film have tended to follow two streams:

- *aesthetic studies*, which apply literary studies paradigms to film
- *industrial studies*, which focus on the social practice and reception of film.

Let's look at each of these in more detail.

#Auteur theory: From the French *auteur*, meaning author; at its most basic, it is the theory that a film has an author, just as a book does, and the author of a film is its director. In its more complex variations, it is a theoretical tool that posits that while it is impossible for there to be a unitary author of a film, given the number of people who contribute to its making, it is still possible to analyse individuals' ability to leave some form of distinctive style or signature on what is essentially an industrial product.

#Seventh art: As an art new to the 20th century, cinema was added to the traditional arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, theatre and philosophy.

Expressive medium: The notion that film works best at expressing the feelings of the artist, through metaphor, allegory and performance.

Formalist medium: The notion that film works best at presenting the best possible examples of film styles and techniques (the film).

German expressionism: A form of filmmaking developed in Germany, particularly Berlin, during the 1920s, which featured highly stylised sets and symbolic acting to reveal the internal emotional struggles of its protagonists (and society).

Russian montage: A form of filmmaking developed in the USSR during the 1920s, based on Sergei Eisenstein's notion of using separate, contrasting images to construct combined new images for the viewer.

Aesthetic studies

Film style

Film style is a particular form of textual analysis specific to film, which attempts to understand how meaning is made. It arose from a combination of film movements in Europe from the 1900s to the 1940s. In the days of the silent films, in state-funded film industries such as those of Germany and Russia, film was being developed as an **expressive** or **formalist medium**. This gave rise to movements such as **German expressionism** and **Russian montage**, which stated that, rather than simply reproducing the world, film actually created its own heavily stylised worlds, though which filmmakers could make statements on important issues. Following the introduction of sound, there was a return to a more **realist filmmaking** mode, particularly after John Grierson's documentary movement in the UK (see below) and the neo-realist film movement in Italy. Together, these movements contributed to a vocabulary of film, a way of describing how films are composed and how they make meaning.

Film style is important for two reasons. First, it refocused attention on European films after the long period of ascendancy of the US film industry. Second, Eisenstein's notion of montage and Bazin's notion of *mise en scène* together became the basis of a new vocabulary for analysing moving images. For a complete listing of this vocabulary, see Tools 3: Textual Analysis and Media Research.

Key theorists and filmmakers

A central figure in film style was Sergei Eisenstein, a Russian filmmaker and critic who is perhaps best remembered for *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Like Méliès, Eisenstein believed that film made meaning through editing a combination of shots—as exemplified by his famous Odessa steps sequence from *Potemkin*. Eisenstein was particularly interested in the juxtaposition of separate shots, which created a montage. Another key theorist was André Bazin, French critic and founder of the enormously influential French journal *Cahiers du Cinéma*, who believed that film made meaning through *mise en scène*: the composition of elements within a shot (Bazin 1997).

Citizen Kane and *Psycho*: textbooks in film style

While you can read about the elements of film style, as film is a medium that blends sight and sound film style is much better experienced on the screen. There can be no better examples than Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* (1941) and Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960). Both are films about complicated men—one a public figure (Charles Foster Kane, played by Orson Welles), the other a very private one (Norman Bates played by Anthony Perkins)—and both films will provide you with just about all you need to know about shot construction, lighting, editing, music and sound.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS: A SUMMARY

Documentary films are fact-based films that depict actual events and people.

- In the early 1900s the French used the term *documentaire* to refer to any nonfiction film, including travelogues.

#Documentary film: A fact-based film that depicts actual events and people.

- John Grierson, the famous Scottish documentary film pioneer, first used the term ‘documentary’ in a review of Robert Flaherty’s 1926 film *Moana* (Cunningham 2005). This landmark film told the story of Samoan Pacific islanders.
- It was another Flaherty film, *Nanook of the North* (1922), that is regarded as the first official documentary or nonfiction narrative film. It was an ethnographic depiction of the austere life of Canadian Inuit living in the Arctic, although some of the film’s scenes of obsolete customs were staged.
- Flaherty’s first sound documentary feature film was the *Man of Aran* (1934). It depicted the rugged Aran islanders and fishermen off the west coast of Ireland’s Galway Bay.
- Documentaries can be a form of journalism (Australian journalist John Pilger is one of the best-known journalist filmmakers).
- Documentaries can also be a form of social commentary.
- Documentaries can also be a conduit for propaganda or personal expression. During the decade before the Second World War, Leni Riefenstahl, who is known to have sympathised with the Nazi government in Germany, made a powerful propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will*. In the following decade, Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series (1942–45) and the British film *London Can Take It* (1940) were persuasive nationalistic documentaries.
- The important distinction separating documentaries from other films is that their purpose is to show us reality rather than invented stories.
- Because they are factual works, they are sometimes known as ‘cinema vérité’, a term that became popular in the 1960s when documentary films began to emphasise a more informal and intimate relationship between camera and subject.
- Because they usually do not reach the large audiences that attend showings of major fiction films, documentaries are generally considered a subgenre of nonfiction, alongside concert films, large format (IMAX) films, compilations and reality films.

John Grierson: the pioneer of documentary filmmaking

Scotsman John Grierson (1898–1972) was the most influential pioneer of documentary film. In the 1920s, he recognised the potential of films to shape people’s lives, and promoted the use of film for educational purposes. He wrote an important essay, ‘First Principles of Documentary’ (Fowler 2002), on documentary filmmaking, taking the French term *documentaire* and transforming it from a word for the classification of travel films into the title of a new film genre. Grierson first used the term in a review of Flaherty’s *Moana* in the *New York Sun*, writing that Flaherty’s *Moana* ‘has documentary value’ (8 February 1926). This remark saw the creation of a movement that still influences documentary filmmakers today.

Grierson was the founder of the British documentary film movement and its leader for nearly four decades. In the 1920s, after graduating from Glasgow University, he won a Rockefeller Fellowship to study in the USA, where he developed an interest in mass communications and the theories of Walter Lippmann. On his return to Britain, Grierson was commissioned to make *Drifters* (1929), a documentary about the North Sea herring fleet. *Drifters* includes many of the attributes that would later characterise documentary filmmaking, particularly an emphasis on the social interaction and daily routine of the fishermen, and the economic value of their work. This film, and Grierson’s involvement in the making of *Night Mail* (1936), a film about loneliness and companionship, as well as about the collection and delivery of letters, were pivotal to the creation of a British film culture.

#Realist filmmaking:

A style of filmmaking seeking to show great fidelity to real life, often through unscripted dialogue and the use of handheld camera and long takes, necessarily limiting the intrusion of the filmmaker; best seen in the British documentary movement and the neo-realist movement in Italy.

#Mise en scène:

Literally ‘placing on stage’; it refers to all the physical elements of a shot (that is, everything that is placed before the camera—props, sets, actors, costumes, make-up and lighting) and how these are arranged to tell the story (for example, revealing narrative information, emotion or even a character’s mental state).

Frank Hurley: Australian pioneer documentary filmmaker

Frank Hurley—adventurer, photographer and polar explorer—was one of Australia’s first documentary filmmakers. In December 1911, Hurley travelled to Antarctica on the expedition led by Douglas Mawson. His feature-length documentary, *Home of the Blizzard*, was released to great acclaim in 1913. In 1917, Hurley released his second documentary film on polar exploration, recording the expedition to the Antarctic led by Ernest Shackleton in 1915–16. The success of *In the Grip of Polar Ice* saw Hurley hailed as Australia’s greatest documentary filmmaker. During the First World War, Hurley produced films for the Australian War Records Office. In the 1920s, he shot several Cinesound features, including *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1934) (Pike & Cooper 1998: 131–2).

Rules of the documentary film genre

- Documentary filmmakers, like journalists, are committed to truth telling in documentary films, and this ideal is reinforced by guidelines and codes of conduct that are issued to producers by broadcasters and commissioning authorities.
- While there are no official rules for documentaries, most documentary filmmakers subscribe to certain ideals, which include filming events as they happen rather than recreating events, representing people as themselves, recording events in a manner that is consistent with available historical evidence and not overtly presenting the filmmaker’s point of view.
- Having noted these ideals, it has to be acknowledged that some of the most influential documentaries have broken these rules. The highest-grossing documentary films of recent times have certainly not adhered to these guidelines; for example, Morgan Spurlock’s *Supersize Me* (2004).
- Nonfiction films have a long history of being used as persuasive tools—overtly, as in Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), and as nationalist propaganda, as in Frank Capra’s *Why We Fight* series and Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will*.
- Michael Moore, the advocacy filmmaker, is the most successful documentary filmmaker of all time. He uses a potent mixture of facts, attention-grabbing journalism and opinion, placing himself on the screen in what has been called **performative documentary**, a style in which the documentary film is constructed around a performance by the filmmaker (Bruzzi 2000: 154).
- The highest-grossing documentary film of all time, Michael Moore’s *Fahrenheit 9/11*, took US\$119.2 million in ticket sales, and was the first documentary to attain the status of a mainstream blockbuster. It was the third Michael Moore film to top the list of highest-grossing documentary films. The others were *Bowling for Columbine* (2002) and *Roger and Me* (1989).
- Al Gore’s 2006 success, *An Inconvenient Truth*, billed as ‘the most terrifying film you will ever see’, is another example of documentary filmmaking where the filmmaker operates in a performative role. This film has been credited with putting climate change on the political agenda of many countries.

The introduction of animation and special effects into documentaries

Animation and special effects have become a part of documentary filmmaking in recent times. While the purists may lament the use of fictional techniques in nonfiction films, this technique has been used to great effect, and can engage audiences in a way that straight delivery cannot. The Australian documentary *After Maeve* (2006) used animation in an emotionally affecting documentary about the sudden death of young Maeve Coughlan. The National Geographic documentary, *March of the*

#Performative
documentary: A style
of documentary film
that is constructed
around a performance
by the filmmaker.

Penguins, which made US\$77.4 million in 2005 and was one of the highest-grossing documentaries of all time, used actors to provide the voices of the penguins in some parts of the world and the actor Morgan Freeman to provide a third-person narrative for its English-language release.

Genre theory

'Genre theory' is a term used to describe how **iconographic** elements—such as setting (temporal and physical), lighting, music and format—and **narrative tropes** (the accepted clichés of the medium, such as the possibility of a positive resolution, the presence of monsters or otherworldly things, a strong romantic plot or people breaking into song to express their feelings) can be organised into and classified according to recognisable types of narrative entertainment, such as science fiction, horror, the western or the musical.

Genre is an aesthetic term coming out of literary studies, treating the film as another bounded text such as a book. But genres are also industrial products. As Schatz (1981: 4) writes:

In their continual efforts to reach as massive an audience as possible, early filmmakers investigated areas of potential audience appeal and, at the same time, standardized those areas whose appeal had already been verified by audience response. In the gradual development of the business of movie production, experimentation steadily gave way to standardization as a matter of fundamental economics.

Through a combination of audience expectation and consumption, filmmakers' repetition and variation on common themes, and studios' economic imperatives, a set of stylistic and narrative conventions emerged that we can think of as **genre**. Film genres are shaped by production, distribution and reception. For while a genre is defined by the film industry, it must be capable of being recognised by the audience.

GREAT GENRE FILMS

To sample some of the genres that are out there, here are a few films that not only function as good genre films but also reflect on the nature of their genres.

Action	<i>Die Hard</i>
Animation	<i>Who Framed Roger Rabbit?</i>
Film noir	<i>Double Indemnity</i>
Horror	<i>The Mist</i>
Melodrama	<i>Imitation of Life</i>
Musicals	<i>Cabaret</i>
Romantic comedy (rom com)	<i>There's Something About Mary</i>
Science fiction	<i>Serenity</i>
Westerns	<i>Unforgiven</i>

#Iconography: From icon; the most recognisable aspects of a text's form and content that represent that text; for example, white hats (the good guys) and black hats (the bad guys) in western movies.

#Narrative tropes: Words, phrases or expressions that recur in particular narratives; for example, the femme fatale (the sexually attractive but dangerous woman) in crime movies of the 1940s.

#Genre: Categories of texts according to shared narrative and iconographic features and codes, as well as categories of commercial products provided by producers and marketers and expected by audiences of texts.

Steve Neale (2000: 7), quoting Tom Ryall, describes it this way:

The master image for genre criticism is the triangle composed of artist/film/audience. Genres may be defined patterns/forms/styles/structures which transcend individual films, and which supervise both their construction by the filmmaker, and their reading by an audience.

In this way, genre theory is more than just a literary model applied to film. When talking about literature, we tend to think only about the writer and reader, and the relationship between them. When talking about film genres, we need to consider the entire process of production, distribution and consumption. Therefore, it may be better to think of genre as a negotiation between the filmmakers, the producers, the distributors and the audience.

Genre theory is important for a number of reasons. First, while genre theory tries to classify and archive films, it also directly deals with power. When we try to decide whether a film succeeds or fails as a genre film, we need to decide what can and cannot be considered as part of a **canon**. We might therefore ask how does this film fit into, or develop or otherwise challenge the canon? Second, genre theory provides us with a way of considering the most basic and formulaic of films and understanding how they negotiate the balance between repetition and innovation that is so vital to being considered a good genre film. Third, a study of genre (and, more particularly, which genres are popular at certain points of time or in certain parts of the world) is also a way of studying changing patterns of taste and consumption. So, genre is not only a way of understanding the relationship between filmmakers, the industry and the audience, but also between filmmaking, filmgoing and the larger culture.

The term 'canon', derived from religion, refers to the essential books of scripture, such as the accepted books of the Bible. Within popular fiction, there is, for example, a canon of Sherlock Holmes books; that is, all those written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Anything not written by Doyle is non-canonical. Only televised episodes of *Doctor Who*, for example, may be considered canon by the fans of the series and its producers (the BBC), rather than the various books, recordings or stage shows based on the series. In the context of film studies, genre theory makes us think about filmic canons and whether a certain film can be considered to be part of a particular generic canon (or not) based upon its generic attributes (plot, setting, etc.).

Key theorists and filmmakers

Genre theory tends to be applied to popular US directors (because it is, essentially, looking at the most popular and formulaic films). However, canons of genre have also been established to focus on certain auteurs (see below), as well as innovators who have been able to stretch and adapt genres in new and interesting ways, such as Steven Spielberg, Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino.

Toy Story 3

For a broad overview of genre, look at the 2010 Disney Pixar release, *Toy Story 3*. In this story of toys learning to find a new place for themselves in the world, now that their owner Andy is preparing to leave for college, the narrative moves through a number of different genres, including romantic comedy, prison film, disaster film and even film noir. See how many you can identify according to their tropes and iconography.

Canon: The set of texts regarded as forming the essence of a particular body of work.



Auteur theory

Auteur theory is the form of textual analysis that emphasises the importance of the auteur of a film. The director is usually regarded as the film's auteur. Auteur theorists concentrate on those textual elements (signature touches) that recur in a number of the same director's films and as such can be considered as evidence of that director's particular style or preoccupations. Auteur theory emerged in France during the mid 1950s and early 1960s, particularly through critics writing for the journal *Cahiers du Cinema*, whose ideas were picked up by American, British and Australian critics and filmmakers during the 1960s. It is a literary and aesthetic framework that places an emphasis on the role of the author in media studies, and so it contradicts most of the other approaches in this book. This theory also focuses our attention on the craft of filmmaking and, more specifically, how an artist can function and leave a distinctive signature touch while working within an industrial framework.

Key theorists and filmmakers

They include André Bazin, founder of *Cahiers du Cinema*, whose ideas were taken up by such people as French critic and filmmaker François Truffaut, who wrote about the notion of the *la politique des auteurs* (the policy of auteurs) in 1954. Auteur theory was subsequently taken up by US critic Andrew Sarris and many others, and has been applied to a range of American directors, including Alfred Hitchcock (director of thrillers), John Ford (director of westerns) and Douglas Sirk (director of melodramas).

ART IN THE AGE OF THE BLOCKBUSTER?

Can film still be regarded as the seventh art in the age of the blockbuster, when special effects flood the screen and film franchises based on recognisable brands dominate the box office? There is an argument for it, depending on your perspective. Those seeking more diversity in filmmaking can look to the rich collection of films from national cinemas and independent features. Ironically, though, the increased availability and advancement in special effects has provided auteurs such as George Lucas or Steven Spielberg with more power than ever before. The use of digital filmmaking enables directors to maintain control over every aspect of what appears in the frame. In this way we could argue that films such as *Avatar* and *Lord of the Rings* are in fact closer to art than many low-tech arthouse films, because the ability to manipulate film digitally makes it a more painterly medium. As a result, the notion of film as art may require some redefinition in the future, lest it simply become a matter of comparing the number of pixels in a sequence on Pandora with the beauty of Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion skeletons in *Jason and the Argonauts*.



Industrial studies

Industrial studies is a form of analysis focusing on the construction and place of the filmmaking industries themselves, rather than their individual films. Industrial analyses tend to analyse filmmaking practices, costs and the way individual countries' industries fit into the pattern of global production and circulation of film. Industrial studies of film emerge from media studies, as well as from a desire to understand how industries local to the concerns of theorists (such as those in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Hong Kong) fit into the larger global (US) film culture.

Industrial studies of film refocus attention on the behind-the-scenes costs and practices of filmmaking. The idea of film as art is therefore subordinated, so that analysts can focus on such matters as the difficulty of making films within these systems. Industrial studies also focus attention on international filmmaking, highlighting the difficulties for many local industries in making their stories and having them distributed. Often they highlight the need for greater government funding of national industries, the ways in which local filmmaking can compete and how local industries can survive through a combination of international infrastructures (as happened in New Zealand with *Lord of the Rings* and in Australia with *The Matrix* and *Star Wars* prequels) and a small export industry.

Key theorists and filmmakers

Notable theorists on the Australian film industry include Tom O'Regan and, as part of her larger work in Australian cultural studies and the Asia–Pacific region, Meaghan Morris, both of whom have mapped the changes in an industry that has long sought to balance telling Australian stories with being commercially viable. O'Regan has, for example, written extensively on the way Warner Brothers' Gold Coast studios have been used for international productions.

Wolf Creek and Australia: working at the edges of the Australian film industry

Unlike the US industry, the Australian film industry has always carried the added burden of having to provide a representation of Australian national identity, tales that reflect the quintessential essence of what it means to be Australian and to live in Australia. This has produced some unique and moving films, such as *Walkabout* (1971), *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) and even *Mad Max* (1979) (if you like cars, guns and a young Mel Gibson). Perhaps the best remembered, at least internationally, is Paul Hogan's *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), which derived its 'quintessential Australianess' from the juxtaposition of its central character (Mick Dundee) against New York City, much as the Barry McKenzie films had juxtaposed their titular lead character against the UK a decade earlier.

But this implicit demand to represent Australian national identity has also presented challenges to filmmakers wanting to fund good genre films, such as the horror film *Wolf Creek* (2005). This is despite the fact that our genre films—and *Mad Max* could be included on that list—are among the best-known and most profitable Australian films internationally. *Wolf Creek* also travelled well, but there was some concern it wouldn't do anything for the tourist industry. (Ironically it did, with *Wolf Creek* becoming quite a tourist site.) Sitting somewhere in between is Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008), a genre film in that it is both a melodrama and a blockbuster, the latter being a genre that Australian films typically don't do, owing to budgetary constraints. *Australia* seeks to represent the quintessence of what it is to be Australian (a battler) and what it means to be living in Australia (presenting copious shots of both the vast outback and the sumptuous natural beauty of the country). Unlike *Wolf Creek*, *Australia* became a central element in a Tourism Australia campaign—a campaign that was ultimately deemed unsuccessful given the (relative) failure of *Australia* at the US box office. The future of the industry may therefore lie with more of an embrace of genre films (the horror genre, particularly, has smaller budgets and reaps good box office returns) or more international production using Australia (and its actors) as a setting.

CHALLENGES OF DISTRIBUTION

Given the queues at the cinema and the enormous grosses of film franchises such as *Iron Man* and *Jurassic Park*, you might not realise that audience attendances for film peaked in the mid 1940s, and that film audiences have been steadily declining since 1946. Because the introduction of sound had been so successful in the early 1930s, the film industry believed that any technological innovation could arrest this slide in audience numbers. Therefore, over the years the industry has tried the following innovations (with varying degrees of success):

- *colour*—such as the Technicolor system, introduced in the mid 1930s; it was seen as a luxury for filmmakers until the 1960s, but now very few films are made in black and white (monochrome)
- *widescreen formats*—such as Cinemascope and Cinerama (introduced in the early 1950s)
- *innovative experiences*—such as 3D films (in which the image seems to jump out of the screen at the audience and each audience member has to wear red and blue glasses), Aromarama and Smell-O-Vision (with cards that had scratch-and-sniff smells), which date from the 1950s and 1960s.

Recently, digital filmmaking has allowed an increased blurring of the distinction between live-action and animated filmmaking; for example, where live-action actors perform digitally animated stunts against digitally animated creatures in digitally animated landscapes. Following the success of *Avatar*, 3D made a return in a big way. But this time it added depth to the image; rather than things jumping out at audiences, it was more like looking through a window on images that seemed to spread beyond the screen, an experience akin to Dorothy opening her black-and-white Kansas home door onto the Technicolour of Oz in *The Wizard of Oz*.

SHARED UNIVERSES

Perhaps the biggest development in film distribution and audience capture by film studios in recent times has been the creation of shared universes. This has been prompted by the enormous success of Marvel Studios' shared universe of superhero films (commencing with *Iron Man* in 2009). When Marvel Studios moved from character licensing to self-financing their own films (beginning under David Maisel in 2004 and currently under Kevin Feige), they sought to replicate the seriality of their comic book source material in two ways: mid- and post-credit scenes involving S.H.I.E.L.D. Director Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) building a team of superheroes called the Avengers Initiative; and repeated use of 'infinity stones'—items of great power weaponised by multiple films' antagonists. This means that the Marvel films operate in a similar way to the story arcs we explored in Chapter 1: multiple discrete narratives (for example, Captain America versus Red Skull) that form the storylines of the individual films that, in turn, fall within the context of larger narrative arcs that connect the films into 'phases' (descriptors that are actually used by the studio themselves) such as the formation of the Avengers and the war against Thanos. In effect, this makes each new Marvel film part of an ongoing story (a serial) and a building block in a shared universe of characters and developments, encouraging film goers to see each and every one. This now extends to allied television series such as *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, *Agent Carter* and *Daredevil*.

This shared universe approach has been replicated by Warner Brothers (in respect of their DC Universe of comic characters like Superman and Batman) and Disney's new *Star Wars* sequence of



films, and, at the time of writing, is being developed for the *Transformers*, *Ghostbusters* and *Universal Monsters* franchises. As such, it represents a narrative expansion of the franchise culture that first emerged in the late 1970s.

Ironically, advances in technology have also done the most damage to the film industry. In the 1950s, the introduction of television almost ruined the film industry for about 10 years. Later, the introduction of home-theatre technologies, such as videotape, provided new threats to films. Digital video discs (DVDs) and their variations (such as Blu-ray), along with digital downloads (both legal and illegal), are the most recent challenges.

The advent of home videotape players in the late 1970s challenged the historic logic of filmgoing—films that had once been inaccessible after their theatrical run (save for a limited re-release or broadcast on television) could now be accessed at any time from a consumer's home and watched as many times as a consumer wanted. Furthermore, the film could be stopped, started and paused, enabling audiences to edit the film's presentation as they saw fit. This was an enormous change in the way films were consumed, as it enabled audiences to develop relationships with particular films and filmmakers based around re-viewing the film rather than relying on some memory of seeing the film in a cinema. Despite the film industry's fears, video did not destroy box-office takings. A night out at the cinema remained the most popular way of consuming films. Videos became an important, but ultimately subsidiary, extension of that experience.

DVDs, Blu Rays and digital downloads alter that experience in two main ways. First, they can provide a viewing experience of a higher quality than that experienced in the theatre. Digital sound technologies in home-theatre systems have helped to make the viewing of a digital film on a digital television a more desirable—or purer—experience than viewing that same digital film at a cinema that often lacks in digital technology. Viewing via these formats becomes not simply a subsidiary extension of film, but may actually be a preferable alternative, particularly given the access of the viewer to all the creature comforts of home.

Second, and perhaps more significantly for the future, these formats feature a variety of extras (something the home video market never really took advantage of), including outtakes, director's commentaries, alternative endings and background information, some running hours longer than the film itself. DVDs, Blu Rays and digital downloads, therefore, provide a more complete viewing experience than the film did during its initial release. Increasingly, then, the film is becoming a teaser for the subsequent digital release rather than the digital release being a subsidiary extension of the film.

DIRECTOR COMMENTARY

The use of DVD, Blu Ray and digital downloads illustrates the ideas of show business—the negotiation between art and commerce—discussed above. In their commentaries, directors will often discuss the tensions involved in bringing their vision to the screen and the concessions that had to be made to the industry.

It is important to think of film as art, because like art it can be communicated through a variety of media. Art exists in sculpture, on canvas, on city walls and, yes, in images, too. Film can similarly exist without cinemas, through digital formats, via tablets, gaming systems, home theatres, laptops and downloads—basically, anywhere an image can be shown on a screen.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Film is both an artistic endeavour and an industrial product, a negotiation between the demands of art and commerce.
- It has provided us with some of the most recognisable representations and ways of understanding the world.
- It has also provided us with a detailed vocabulary for understanding how still and moving images make meaning.
- Film can be studied through genre analysis, industrial analysis, auteur theory and analysis of film style.
- While the future of film distribution may be in doubt, there is no doubt that filmmaking and filmgoing will continue to exist, in many forms, for many years to come.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What factors have contributed towards film being referred to as 'the seventh art'?
- 2 How has digital technology impacted upon film making and distribution?
- 3 How do you consume film? Are you concerned about the impact of film piracy (via illegal download sites) on the industry? Why or why not?
- 4 Analyse one of your favourite films using the different approaches outlined: film style, auteur theory, genre analysis and industrial analysis. Do these theoretical lenses change your appreciation of the film?
- 5 Can you suggest another potential shared universe that could be brought to the screen? How might it work and how might it impact upon filmmaking and distribution?

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TELEVISION: THE ZOO

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin ...

You unlock this door with the key of imagination.
Beyond it is another dimension—a dimension of
sound, a dimension of sight, a dimension of mind.
You're moving into a land of both shadow and
substance, of things and ideas ...

These are the openings to the UK's *Listen with Mother* and the USA's *The Twilight Zone*, classic programs that were both a part of television from almost its inception (commencing 1950 and 1959, respectively). Almost halfway between them, in 1956, television was first introduced to Australia. Since that time, it has been our pre-eminent media industry. As a domestic form of media, it is part of almost everyone's home. As a 'magpie medium', it has appropriated earlier forms from vaudeville to radio shows, updating and adapting them to suit its own requirements. As a mass media form, shared by billions of people across the globe, it has remained the most successful medium for bringing vast groups of people together around common issues, passions and ways of thinking, while seeming as intimate as a voice in the room or a window in the wall.

But in recent times television's position has been under siege. YouTube and digital media have been displacing it. Its mass audience has continued to fragment across a multiplicity of cable stations and other media platforms. Yet, at the same time, television sales remain the strongest they have ever been. Australia has never had a greater choice of channels, and a large proportion of television output is available on demand, either through VOD (video on demand) services like Netflix, streaming sites like the ABC's iView, DVD/Blu Ray collections or downloads (both legal and illegal).

In this way television has started to evolve beyond its own medium. It is reinventing itself through innovative programming and distribution decisions. It is re-asserting its dominance as the preeminent media form, both in the volume of viewers it captures for big events and as the artistic medium of choice for media practitioners.

As US science fiction series *The Outer Limits* once warned us:

There is nothing wrong with your television. Do not attempt to adjust the picture. We are now in control of the transmission. We control the horizontal and the vertical. We can deluge you with a thousand channels, or expand one single image to crystal clarity and beyond. We can shape your vision to anything our imagination can conceive. For the next hour, we will control all that you see and hear.

Television, accessible across more platforms than ever before, is healthier than ever before. In this chapter we look at:

- a history of television
- the principles of television
- new approaches to television in the digital age.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TELEVISION

Television maintains a privileged position in the public sphere for three main reasons:

- *It remains the communal site for large groups of people.* Since its inception no other medium has brought together large groups of people more effectively than television, whether to find out who shot J.R. Ewing on *Dallas* in the 1980s, to commemorate the life of Diana, Princess of Wales in the 1990s, to take part in the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000, to see Prime Minister Kevin Rudd say sorry to Indigenous Australians in 2008, to share the grief of seeing floodwaters rise across the Brisbane CBD in 2011, or to experience the horror of the Red Wedding on *Game of Thrones* in 2013. Television has replaced, or at the very least displaced, the town or church hall as the meeting place for large groups of people. Even now, in the post-broadcast era (see Chapter 10), it still remains the central medium in the public sphere; while online audiences may be getting larger, they tend to be more fragmented.
- *It is a domestic form of media.* Television is a part of people's homes. People don't have to go to television; they simply have to switch it on.
- *It is a common ground for large groups of people.* Television is a source of shared knowledge between people, often regardless of geographical location.

TABLE 7.1 Television Milestones in Australia

1956	Television introduced to Australia to coincide with the Melbourne Olympic Games. (Internationally, television is often introduced to capitalise on a spectacle. For example, in the UK, television was introduced in time for the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.) In the early years of Australian television, the major form of local content was low-cost variety and quiz shows, such as <i>In Melbourne Tonight</i> and <i>Pick-a-Box</i> . Successful radio formats were imported to television, starting with Australia's first local drama, the courtroom-based <i>Consider Your Verdict</i> .
1964	Eighty per cent of households owned a television set
1974	Ninety per cent of households owned a television set. Broadcasting in the 1970s became a highly profitable enterprise, with profit margins of between 15 and 20 per cent.
1975	Colour television was introduced. Local dramas, based around Australian locales and concerns, continued to be important in Australia throughout the 1970s and into the 1980s.
1980s	This was the start of a localising trend, largely prompted by regulatory requirements for Australian content, which saw the introduction of a number of new long-running dramas, such as <i>Prisoner</i> and <i>Number 96</i> , and lavish miniseries such as <i>Bodyline</i> , <i>All the Rivers Run</i> and <i>Return to Eden</i> .
1990s	Inexperienced operators, high interest rates and the 1987 stock market crash reduced profits in the Australian television industry—Channels Seven and Ten went into receivership. Throughout the 1990s, the stations all reduced production of expensive local dramas, making significant cuts in local programming and seeking low-cost formats in an effort to reverse their fortunes. This led to an increase in lifestyle and reality series, as well as the increasing reliance of channels on imported programming.
1995	Cable television station Foxtel began broadcasting in Australia. Formed via a joint venture between Telstra and News Corp, this was not the first cable television provider in Australia, but it soon proved to be the strongest: it acquired Galaxy TV subscribers, formed a partnership with Austar and entered into a content sharing agreement with Optus TV.
2001	Digital television began broadcasting in Australian metropolitan areas, with regional areas following.
2008	Freeview was launched, a consistent marketing platform for Australia's digital terrestrial (that is, free-to-air [FTA]) channels. Each FTA was allocated three digital channels, offering viewers a total of fifteen channels from the Freeview brand in direct competition to cable channels such as Foxtel, in part to encourage viewers to embrace digital technology.
2009	The first of the new Freeview channels was launched: Channel Ten's formerly sport-only channel, One
2014	The completion of the switchover to digital took place: the rollout of digital television and the switching off of the last of the analogue signals.

What television is really doing is providing audiences with knowledge of nations. Media theorists such as John Hartley, John Fiske and Alan McKee note the ways in which television enables audiences to place themselves in relation to the rest of the world. This occurs not only through news, which

provides audiences with knowledge of local, national and international issues, but also through sport, which enables us to compete as nations and as parts of nations, as well as dramas, which give us some insight into how we and the peoples of other nations present ourselves.

This knowledge of nations is acquired in two ways:

- *through national events*, which bring audiences together as nations, such as during sporting telecasts and large dramatic moments; for example, the final episode of *Seinfeld*, a televised funeral or a wedding
- *through internationalisation*, via foreign infrastructure investment that promotes production (for example, US production houses in New Zealand) and through the sale and exchange of formats and series overseas. Endemol, for example, a Netherlands production company, is one of the major providers of reality television in the world.

A double-faced culture

Media theorist Tom O'Regan refers to Australian television as being 'double-faced': a blend of local and imported product that produces 'an amalgam of different cultures ... and multiple identities' (O'Regan 1993: 96). Australian television drama relies on 'innovation through producers adjusting—and audiences adjusting to—local program and cultural traditions with common international formats evident from contemporaneous US and British imports' (O'Regan 1993: 87). This leads to innovative Australian formats with, say, our own type of soap opera, such as *Neighbours* or *Home and Away*, which blends American melodrama with British social realism.

O'Regan's (1993) notion of double-faced cultures was developed around Australian television, but it can apply to a range of television industries outside the USA; that is, any television industry composed of one or more imported cultures (such as US or British) and a very small local export industry.

Principles of television

Television has, historically, been based upon three apparently contradictory principles: show business, flow and delay.

Show business

Television shares this quality with film: the notion of maintaining the balance between *creativity* and *cost*—between the *show* and the *business*. This is especially important for commercial television and is as true of news production as any entertainment genre. Commercial television is a medium designed to sell goods and services; it also sells audiences to advertisers. This is what drives production—to create something desirable for audiences to watch, and thereby attract audiences to advertisers—and drives television's search for global export and growth.

So how is this changing? Accessing television through distribution means such as VOD, downloads, DVDs or even TiVo (a system that tapes television programs and removes the advertisements) clearly challenges this balance between the show and the business because, while producers and networks still need to cover their costs, advertisers are taken out of the supply chain.

Therefore, more creative ways of generating profits ('the business') need to kick in: licence fees and access fees (for VOD services), product placement and pop-up ads (during programs).

Importantly, television remains at the centre of many of the moves towards social media. For example, iPod, Disney and ABC have a deal whereby a missed episode of one of their television series can be downloaded to an iPod for \$1.99; PlayStation has exclusive television content (such as the crime/superhero series *Powers*) created for them as the PlayStation Network; CBS has entered into a partnership with Google to sell programs online; Fox and the BBC have offered downloadable mobisodes (television segments for mobile phones) of their programs in the past, such as *24* and *Doctor Who*; and the US network NBC and the Australian network Nine are both allied with Microsoft (forming MSNBC and ninemsn, respectively), while Seven has a partnership with Yahoo! (forming Yahoo!7). All television news is regularly updated online and all bulletins point viewers to the web for additional, usually audience-generated, content (such as mobile phone footage) and advice on the ways in which the public can help out. And, of course, attached to each of these extensions of traditional media are additional opportunities for advertising and product placement.

Television also remains a major source of content for digital media forms (such as You Tube and the production of many internet memes), so television will always necessarily remain a content provider for any number of digital distribution platforms. In addition, audiences will always watch television shows—but maybe not always on a television set. Futurist Mike Walsh, for example, suggests that we are fast approaching a time where the main purpose of television will be to drive us to the accompanying website; that is, television will exist only to support web content. Television may come to refer to content (the programs you watch) rather than a specific medium (that increasingly large and crystal-clear screen you have at home), which may be given over to gaming instead.

HOME THEATRE

Is television, as a medium, really going to die any time soon? In recent years, enthusiastic acceptance by Australian audiences has led to the rapid adoption of **home theatre** technology. Despite the variety of distribution platforms on offer, audiences continue to spend large amounts of money updating their televisual technology, and because of the adoption of large screens and complex sound systems, television has again become a design feature of the home. With added features—such as more free-to-air digital channels and advancements in 3D technology—it seems that television is more likely to displace cinema than be displaced itself. At the very least, the medium of television would seem to have an extended lease on life as the medium of choice for gamers, while somewhat ironically the content of television may exist independently of that via the medium of computers and tablets.

Flow

In television, **flow** is the way in which one moment of drama or information leads to the next, encouraging us to watch television in a certain way—through narrative ('Will X end up with Y?' or 'Will Y survive the train accident? Join us again next week'), streaming or scheduling (for example, *Beautiful Sunday* on Seven, Friday Night Football or *House of Cards* on demand).

Once again, accessing television through alternative distribution means such as VOD clearly challenges the notions of flow; in the case of the VOD streaming service Netflix, entire seasons



#Home theatre:

Electronic facilities in the home, such as large screens and five-speaker sound systems, that emulate facilities once found only in cinemas and theatres.

low: In television, the way one moment of drama or information leads to the next.

of *House of Cards* and *Orange is the New Black* are available all on the one, same, day of release. This, together with DVD/Blu Ray releases, has led to a change in the production of television drama, with episodic series giving way to longer, arc-driven programs that can be enjoyed sequentially: series such as *Game of Thrones*, *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. This similarly allows for more complex, self-referential storylines as producers are writing a narrative they know you have access to in one sitting (rather than delayed across multiple weeks, see below). It also leads to a variation on this idea of flow, that of bingeing.

Bingeing is the watching of a succession of television episodes in one sitting. Bingeing can occur via VOD, downloading episodes from the internet or, more commonly, watching a large group of episodes in a DVD/Blu Ray package. (Who has sat down with a boxed set of *True Blood* at the beginning of a day and emerged, like a mole, some six hours later having consumed most of them? That's bingeing.) Some consumers will watch all of a boxed set of DVD/Blu Rays: a complete season of up to twenty-two episodes of a television series in a short period of time. Similarly, Netflix's distribution model (an entire series being accessible on the one day) means that people could binge on an entire season of *House of Cards* in the span of 24 hours. Increasingly, these are the new flows of television.

#Bingeing: The watching of a succession of television episodes in one sitting.

Delay

Delay is the way in which consumption of television is always indefinitely postponed: traditionally through advertising ('Will he win the million dollars? We'll return after this commercial break'), narrative (the cliffhanger, the 22-minute episode) and scheduling (sports being presented towards the end of a news bulletin, a daily serial or a weekly series). Media industries such as television produce goods that are never completely consumed. While delay is similarly challenged by VOD and complete series box sets, complete consumption of the programs audiences watch is always delayed to some extent; for example, there will be an additional season, a 'special edition' box set so you can relive the series with added features, a spin-off into a new series, or more merchandise made available. As a result, audiences are continually being returned to advertisers, continuing to pay more so that they can consume a little more of the programs they enjoy.

#Delay: The way in which consumption of television is indefinitely postponed through advertising, narrative or scheduling.

Perhaps the best example of this continual play of audiences between the competing demands of flow and delay are **spoilers**. Spoilers are important details about television narrative that are revealed before the wider audience has gained access to them. To some extent these have always been part of television culture—daytime soap operas encouraged viewer interest by revealing information about upcoming storylines to viewers (encouraging flow); viewer pleasure was then derived from seeing how these events played themselves out. However, the practice of downloading television series and accessing online reviews has so increased access to spoilers that they often have to be built into the program to generate a desire to keep watching. Here the delay in distributing television actually becomes a strategy in the flow to keep audiences watching. Some programs, for example, thrive on the fact that they must be viewed on the day of release before they are 'spoiled'. *Game of Thrones*, the most illegally downloaded series in Australia for the past few years, thrives on this; so many main characters are under threat of being killed at any given time that viewers are keen to watch a new episode as soon as possible before they find out who is for the axe, or the knife, or the many, many swords ...

#Spoiler: Details about a narrative that are revealed before the wider audience has gained access to them. The term is so well known it became the catch phrase of the character River Song (Alex Kingston) on *Doctor Who*, referring to her ability to time travel and thus 'spoil' elements of people's futures.

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON TELEVISION

As television adapts to the digital media environment, a new set of principles for television is needed to describe what it is that television is doing—and continues to do—throughout these changes in distribution.

Television scholar Robert C. Allen (Allen & Hill 2004) says that because television is ubiquitous and so much a part of our lives, it has become almost invisible to us. To focus on television as an object of study, we need to make it strange. So as academic interest in television has increased, a number of possible models for thinking about television have been advanced.

Drawing on Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier's cultural study of zoos, *Zoo: A History of Zoological Gardens in the West* (2004), I suggest another model for television: the zoo. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier described a zoo as 'the enclosed space containing a collection of animals' (2004: 10) that came into existence in the 16th and 17th centuries, when the idea of establishing 'a single place for their exhibition' developed, and 'the first theatres of the wild were created in the grounds of grand princely residences; these establishments which turned the act of keeping animals into a spectacle' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 13).

Why is television like a zoo?

Similarity of aims

Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004) write about the zoo's development from the time in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries when cabinets of curiosities were favoured by the aristocracy, scholars, doctors and affluent bourgeoisie. In these cabinets a clear parallel with television is made:

They were envisaged as microcosms, as condensations of the perceivable, understandable world. They contained disparate collections of all the rare and curious things that would best express the diversity and power of human, divine and natural invention. (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 30)

Zoos carry on this idea by exhibiting a diversity of animals from different areas; television carries on this idea by exhibiting a diversity of programs. Consider the fact that at any one night you can access a half-hour contemporary sitcom like *The Big Bang Theory* or a one-hour historical drama like *Mad Men*. The range of television forms—increasing out to documentaries, shorts, animation, puppetry, reality television, game shows, soap operas, live telecasts, music videos and news feeds—is extraordinary.

Zoo TV

On 29 February 1992, the Irish rock group U2 began an elaborate worldwide arena tour entitled Zoo TV, which was to last for almost two years. The tour marked a change in U2's music. With its incorporation of techno pop and a change in performance style, the earnestness of their earlier hit album *The Joshua Tree* was replaced by a technological marvel of a stage designed by Peter 'Willie' Williams that incorporated numerous television cameras, 176 speakers and thirty-six video monitors that featured everything from random slogans and multimedia performance artists to videotaped 'confessions' of audience members.

The tour was a satirical response to CNN's coverage of the first Gulf War in 1991, emblematic of what Bono and the other band members saw as the media overload that was dominating the 1990s. But during the European leg of the tour (Zooropa) something else happened: the band began initiating live link-ups to people in wartorn Sarajevo. Inspired by Bill Carter's documentary *Miss Sarajevo*, the band intended to highlight the suffering of a people they considered were being ignored by the bulk of the world's media. Over the course of the tour, U2 members came to realise how television could function as a cultural resource—and all through this metaphor of the zoo.

Similarity of structure

- *Both zoos and television programs present themselves as a series of scenes separated from us by a screen, a railing or bars.* Television, like the zoo, is a microcosm, an observational space, a way of containing the world and presenting 'the wild' in a domestic setting (your home). This is particularly apparent in news reports that can take us around the world ('the wild') in a matter of minutes, but is also true of documentaries and other programming that exposes us to other parts of life and living we may not otherwise experience. Regardless of medium, television content is always contained behind some type of screen (whether that is a tablet or laptop, on a plane or in a home).
- *Both zoos and television programs use natural resources,* the zoo in its exploitation of wild animals, the television in its use of naturally occurring waves. As Allen explains:

The [television licensing] system rests upon a policy established by the US government more than half a century ago—and subsequently 'exported' to countries around the world—regarding how the nation's airwaves would be utilized, by whom, and for what purposes. Television signals travel through the air as electromagnetic signals riding on naturally occurring waves. They share the electromagnetic spectrum with other forms of electronic communication [radios, microwave transmissions, etc.] ... By the 1920s, it had become clear in the United States that, as a public utility belonging to a nation as a whole, the finite spectrum space had to be regulated if this natural resource was to be utilized beneficially and if broadcasting chaos was not to ensue. The [Federal Communications Commission] was formed to allocate spectrum space to various services, assign stations in each service by issuing operating licenses, and regulate existing stations by establishing guidelines and acting on requests for license renewals (Allen 1992: 17).

- *Both zoos and television environments are laid out for us,* but there is freedom for us to stray from the directed pathways. In both, there is a sense of moving in a certain way: zoos are mapped and arranged for us (into aquariums, aviaries, petting zoos, baby animals, reptile houses, wild cats' areas, etc.), while schedulers and network executives map out television for us (into news, current affairs, drama, sport, the late movie, etc.). In both there is the opportunity for viewers to make their own way, either by moving between exhibits at the zoo at will (for example, lions first, then reptiles, and then the aviary) or by viewing television through other distribution systems, such as VODs, DVD/Blu Rays or downloads, or simply by channel hopping via a remote control.

THE NEWS HOUR

The centrepiece of most television stations' scheduling is their news block, the idea being that if viewers watch the news they will stay with the network for the rest of that night's schedule. It also attracts a great deal of advertising revenue, particularly from high-end products such as cars. For many years in Australia, Channel Nine dominated with its news hour of *National Nine News* and *A Current Affair* (from 6pm to 7pm). But over recent years, capitalising on the success of their morning news–entertainment show *Sunrise* and its evening lead-in *Deal or No Deal*, Channel Seven has been winning the news hour with *Seven News* and *Today Tonight*. Even more recently, Channel Ten entered the news war with (originally) not one but two-and-a-half hours of news (from 5pm to 7.30pm), a 5pm–6pm news bulletin targeting an older audience, *6pm with George Negus* (promoted as offering depth and experience, and an alternative to the other channels' 6pm bulletins), a 6.30pm local news bulletin (again offering an alternative to the 6.30pm current affairs programs) and *The 7pm Project*, targeting a younger audience, with a mix of news and humour. While *The Project* continues to this day (having dropped the time reference from its name), the limited success of the rest of this schedule demonstrates how difficult it can be for networks to remain connected with their audiences.

- *Both zoos and television environments exist as perfect laboratories* (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 10). Just as the zoo trades in ideas of nature, control and curiosity, television trades in ways of representing the world and in ways of thinking about the world. Television becomes a way of testing out different ways of thinking about the world (see Chapter 10) by wedding theory (ideas) with practice (narratives). This is especially apparent if we think about the variety of genres of television. Soap operas, for example, provide ideas of ethics ('How should I behave in this situation?'), science fiction series provide ideas of philosophy ('Who am I?' and 'What is my place in the universe?') and police series provide ideas of sociology ('How should society be organised?' and 'What is justice?').

WHAT ABOUT SMELL?

One of the things that strikes us whenever we visit a zoo is the smell: all those different smells from all those different animals. Television cannot replicate that ... or can it? This is not a reference to Smell-O-Vision, but the idea that media products have distinctive odours. This idea, put forward by media theorist Koichi Iwabuchi, suggests that media products have traces or elements that reveal their place of origin. They could be accents, particular locations or particular expressions. By contrast, an 'odourless' media product would be one where it is hard to know where it came from, because it is so hard to identify any traces of its country of origin. Just as we can use smells at a zoo to differentiate between animals, we can also use 'odour' on television to differentiate between, for example, US, British and Australian television programs.

Similar patterns of study

The study of zoos also parallels the study of television in other ways. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004: 80) note the early distinction between the word 'zoo', which focuses attention on 'the contents of the space (zoology)', and the phrase 'zoological gardens', which focuses attention on 'the space itself'.

Students of television studies have continued to divide themselves between institutional and industrial analyses (the 'zoological garden') and textual analyses of particular programs (the 'zoology'), though we'd argue that the best analyses contain elements of both. As noted earlier, the continuing increase in alternative distribution platforms for television content means that, more and more, television content is beginning to exist independently of the medium of television. Future analyses of television may therefore focus more on the interplay between, for example, the DVD/Blu Ray industry and television series, or distribution models, rather than the television industry and television series.

Similarity of functions

The four functions of the zoo can also be understood as the four functions of television. Again, as Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004) write, these are:

- recreation
- education
- research
- conservation.

We now look at each of these functions in more detail.

Television and recreation

Zoos and television both appear to have been designed for recreation. Pleasure parks and zoological gardens 'responded to a growing desire among worthy citizens to escape, just for a moment, from urban noise, dirt and crowds ... to distinguish private and working life' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 100). Sitting down and watching television, regardless of the delivery system, has also typically marked the demarcation between work time and leisure time.

Both similarly depend on spectacle to attract audiences, particularly the spectacle of the exotic. Exotic animals (the odd, the ferocious and the wild) always draw record numbers to zoos. Similarly, television viewers gravitate towards the exotic on television. They enjoy seeing familiar places (note the popularity in Australia of local accents and locations commencing in programs such as *Homicide* through to the *Underbelly* franchise), but exotic stories—police procedurals, medical dramas and science fiction series—are always popular. Although audiences enjoy seeing domestic dramas (domestic in the sense of being local, and featuring stories and people they can relate to), on television the emphasis has always been on the larger dramas of life, hence the weddings, births and deaths that draw big audience numbers for soap operas, or the volume of police and hospital shows dealing with serial killers or freakish death. Both are providing an entertainment service.

In these instances, this function of recreation disguises the true industrial nature of these organisations: they are designed to attract a profit. This applies to commercial television networks, not government-owned or community broadcasters. It can also apply to news services that blend humour or feature a mix of soft news stories, such as *The Project*. In the context of the zoo, its patrons 'still [see] nature less as a community to be conserved than as a commodity to be consumed' (environmentalist Aldo Leopold, cited in Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 280). Similarly, for commercial networks, 'the principal aim of broadcasting is not to entertain, enlighten, or provide a public service; it is to make a profit' (Allen 1992: 17).

THE ECONOMY OF TELEVISION

Networks sell air time, with the price of thirty seconds of air time being determined by the statistical probability that a certain number of people fitting certain demographic descriptions will be tuned into the station at the moment the ad is being broadcast. Importantly, television sells audiences to advertisers, not advertisements to audiences. It does this by placing advertisements during programs that are popular with audiences or certain segments of the audiences.

John Fiske (in Burns & Thompson 1989) suggests that a dual economy works in commercial television: a *political economy* that produces an audience that can be sold to advertisers as a commodity, and a *cultural economy* that reflects the way audiences' consumption produces meanings and pleasures.

As we have seen above, the cultural economy is structured around these competing demands of flow and delay—audiences are continually being returned to advertisers so they can consume a little more of the programs they enjoy.

HOW DO THE PRODUCERS OF THE PROGRAM MAKE MONEY?

Apart from being paid by the network for their show, program makers have traditionally made most of their money through syndication, whereby the program is sold overseas or 'stripped' (syndicated) for repeat screenings. Money can also be made through merchandising and DVD/Blu Ray sales. It was these revenue streams that made *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for example, highly profitable for Warner Brothers, and kept it on air for seven seasons.

Merchandising is another thing television shares with the zoo. Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004) write that in the early 1800s, 'London's hippopotamus was welcomed by an immense crowd, becoming the hero of *Punch* cartoons and a multitude of engravings ... Small silver reproductions of him were sold at the Strand, while the "Hippopotamus Polka" was a hit in London's salons' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 170). We discuss merchandising in more detail in Chapter 19.

The dual economy of television—the content of television and the cultural values it represents and responds to—are inseparable. They fit together to create the recreational aspect of television that audiences enjoy. Even when distributed across alternative media platforms, television is still presented as entertainment and remains a commodity that must make a profit. And delay still functions in terms of narrative, which is structured into the episodes themselves irrespective of whether the format is scheduled, streamed, a DVD/Blu Ray release or a downloadable file.

Twin Peaks, televisuality and the HBO model

'It all starts with *Twin Peaks*,' writes *Herald Sun* television columnist Dianne Butler on the 20th anniversary of the series' first screening, 'I love this show ... Because of what it is, but also because of what it did for the industry, the way it said it was all right to treat TV like a film' (2010: 3). In this way, despite its relatively short run and critical panning at the time, *Twin Peaks* remains one of the purest examples of what John Caldwell (1995) terms 'televisuality'—that

combination of the industrial, technical and authorial that became increasingly complex and more demanding of television audiences during the 1980s.

In 1990, *Twin Peaks* confirmed the possibility raised in *Moonlighting* that television could be an art form (it brought indie auteur David Lynch to television). It inventively blended the ongoing soap opera subplots introduced in *Hill Street Blues* with the idea of the story arc, as presented in *Wiseguy* (revealing the freedom media producers could enjoy working with long-form narratives). And it moved American quality television towards the 'quirky', complex and filmic character-based dramas that are now increasingly prevalent on HBO, AMC, Showtime and Netflix, and are even starting to infiltrate network television schedules again (NBC's *Hannibal*, for example). Following on from earlier successes such as *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under*, such series are often referred to as following 'the HBO model': high-quality, non-mainstream television that rates well and sells well in DVD/Blu Ray collections. As such, *Twin Peaks* stands at the apex of televisuality, a summation of what came before and an indication of what was to come next. Unsurprisingly, perhaps in acknowledgment of *Twin Peaks*' legacy on narrative cable programming, *Twin Peaks* was revived as a limited series on Showtime in 2016, 25 years after the series first ended.

Television and education

Zoos and television are both democratised spaces, designed to be accessible to the public and to draw massive audiences all over the world.

Zoos justified this democratisation when they were 'proposed as venues for the entertainment and moral improvement of the working classes' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 105), a process of liberalising admissions in the 1950s that was concurrent with the general rise in living standards in the West (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 201). Television has similarly tried to justify its democratisation by appealing to education.

This is because democratic spaces often create anxieties and tensions. A writer of a stroller's guide in Brussels (1856) wrote: 'The zoological gardens have today passed so completely into public habit that one must ask oneself what, three years ago, the inhabitants of Brussels did between coffee time and tea' (in Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 100, n. 34). John Hartley (1992b) similarly suggests that television's populism and immediacy make it an unreflective and 'scandalous' medium, while Graeme Turner (Turner & Cunningham 2000) notes the ambivalence with which television is regarded—blamed for violence, depression, sexism and racism, but also regarded as so trivial as to not be deserving of study.

As we noted earlier, television is a domestic medium. To watch television, you don't need to leave your house, as you do when you want to visit a zoo. Television is always there and anyone can access it. Such unmediated access has prompted governments to set up regulatory authorities to restrict **cross-media ownership**, prohibit some types of advertising (such as tobacco products), provide a ratings system and, most importantly, decide what can and cannot be broadcast. Further, in countries such as Australia and New Zealand, with small domestic television markets, government regulation extends to ensuring that certain programs are shown: there are minimum national content quotas that television stations are obliged to fill to ensure that audiences are seeing their own stories in their own accents and their own locations.

#Cross-media ownership:

The ownership of one major source of news and information (such as a television station) in the same territory as another other major source (such as a daily newspaper or radio station).

Anxiety arises in part because zoos and television traditionally have been seen as family entertainments, led by children. During the 20th century, children enjoyed an increasingly privileged place in the family, and both zoos and other media forms contributed to the dominant position of animals within children's imaginations. In this respect, television particularly perpetuates the work of books and films.

As Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier note (2004: 207), television and zoos exist in an inverse relationship to each other, with television 'transforming real creatures into imaginary ones, [inverting] the process that had taken place in the early modern era of enhancing the reality of animals that had seemed fantastical'.

One of the ways of combating anxieties around democratised spaces was to push for these spaces to be educational. Scholars were responsible for the creation of many zoos, though their stewardship was later replaced by businessmen and politicians. Popularising natural history has always been a popular function of zoos and television (think of David Attenborough's work in the context of television), though in practice the entertainment value of both triumphed (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 209).

Similarly, television has apportioned some of its air time to educational programming—such as documentaries, historical pieces, art shows, plays and other forms of children's education—though increasingly these have become the province of national broadcasters and cable channels. While television is often criticised for not lifting the standard of public education, it does contribute in its own way to the public sphere by advancing pluralist discourses and encouraging research. Perhaps television's great educational ability is in telling us what is regarded as important by different members of society.

Television and research

Bizarre as it initially may seem, television also shares the zoo's practical objectives for natural history, including:

- observation and theory
- ideas of nationhood
- acclimatisation
- classification and genre
- reality.

Observation and theory

Television presents us with events from across the globe, and a range of different ideas about the world and the institutions therein.

As with a zoo, television reveals 'unknown worlds and diverse life forms; they pose the eternal questions of identity, challenging or reinforcing life's certainties' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 9). This is true not only of genre television—with its insistence on otherworldliness, as in *True Blood*, *Star Trek* and *Doctor Who*—but also of television that depicts certain areas of society, such as legal and police processes (for example, the *Law & Order* franchise), representations of hospitals (*Grey's Anatomy*), politics (*The West Wing*), youth culture (*The Hills*) and queer culture (*Queer as Folk*).

Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004: 181) write: ‘The public’s relationship with the animals in a zoological garden was therefore based on attraction and repulsion, curiosity and fear.’ This ambivalence is made visible in the use of railings, and later wooden joists, bars and cages, to contain the animals in zoos. A similar relationship occurs between television series and the television viewer: think of your own reaction to the violence of *The Sopranos*, the stunts of *Jackass*, the misogyny of *Mad Men* or the carnage of *World’s Worst [Whatever] Disasters*.

Sometimes this even carries over to interactivity. In zoos, this took the form of feeding the animals: ‘the desire for exchange’ (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 185). In television, texts provide their viewers, through cliffhangers and interactivity—as in the voting practices in *Australian Idol* or *The Voice*—with delay tactics. DVD/Blu Rays allow us to control the flow of television: we can pause, replay or fast-forward the narrative as we wish, or simply skip ahead to our favourite scenes.

Unsurprisingly, the rise in interactive television corresponds with the rise in digital media: the ultimate interactive media form (see Chapter 4).

Ideas of nationhood

In relation to zoos, Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier (2004: 9) argue that ‘the exhibition of wild-life in the midst of civilised societies has been a constant of human history because it has helped people to place themselves in relation to the rest of the world. Human beings need the wild and endlessly seek it out’. Television similarly allows us to place ourselves in relation to the rest of the world. It gives us a sense of nationhood, and presents us as a nation with local, national and international issues. Think of the appeal to the nation to assist during times of natural disasters, for example.

Acclimatisation

Just as zoos were involved in the ‘the domestication of exotic species with the aim of introducing new resources to society at large’ (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 141), television provides popular knowledge about professions that are exotic species we may not otherwise know about, introducing their practices (sometimes challenging them, sometimes supporting them) to society at large. Television programs have featured such professions as ad men (*Mad Men*), funeral directors (*Six Feet Under*), politicians (*The West Wing*), private eyes (*The Rockford Files*), lawyers (*Boston Legal*), writers (*Castle*) and a mix of characters from all strata of society (*Dynasty*, *Gossip Girl* and *Shameless*).

Just as ‘zoos often participated in the long process of understanding wild animals, despite the fact that the specimens they offered for observation were more virtual than natural’ (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 281), our knowledge of law, for example, comes almost entirely from television, through series such as *Perry Mason*, *LA Law*, *Law & Order* and *Boston Legal*. These are constructed representations, which are often highly stylised and exaggerated—‘more virtual than natural’ (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 281)—and we don’t think that they’re real, but they do provide us with a working knowledge of legal processes.

Classification and genre

Zoos and television, then, also exist as forms of classification. The creation of the menagerie at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris was in part a result of a desire among scholars of the time (1792) to create a place where animal behaviour could be studied and classified.

Television similarly offers us a way of classifying media texts by genre. As we have seen in the context of film (Chapter 6) and will see in media more generally (Chapter 9), genre is a way of categorising the output of media industries based on particular codes embedded in the media form itself—be they temporal, structural or textual—and this is a method that can be equally applied to television.

In television, this idea of genre doesn't work as well as it does in film or popular literature because programs are becoming increasingly hybridised. Even in the early days of television, series combined genres: the variety shows, *Dark Shadows* (horror and soap opera), *The Wild Wild West* (western and spy series), *Robotech* (soap opera and anime) and *V* (soap opera and science fiction). Other series give viewers narrative pleasure by moving through different generic forms—for example, *Picket Fences* or *Doctor Who*—and some series themselves became labelled as genre (for example, *Max Headroom* or *The Prisoner*) or postmodern (*Twin Peaks*, *Wild Palms* and *Moonlighting*) because they defied conventional generic classification.

This has led to genres being invented for series that exist as hybrid genres (such as 'dramedy' for *Ally McBeal*) and providing contexts for television series as they continue to diversify (from funeral homes in *Six Feet Under* and operating theatres in *Nip/Tuck* to prisons in *Oz* and the White House in *The West Wing*). Often, all that connects these forms is the term 'drama'. Even drama can hardly function as a category, as it ranges from highly structured dramas such as *The Edwardian House* to game shows such as *The Amazing Race* and *Survivor*, and further, to combinations of the two, such as *Big Brother*. Even the news genre covers types of program as diverse as news services, current affairs shows and chat shows. However, television continues to present the appearance of a classification system, which is replicated in television guides around the world, and in the blurbs and marketing used to sell DVDs. Interestingly, television programmers speak of formats—the time a program runs and the number of weeks it runs for—rather than genres, so 'genre' is not an industry term.

Soap operas and superheroes

Much like film genres, genres on television can and do evolve over time. In the 1950s, for example, cowboy programs made up the bulk of television schedules. Now crime dramas occupy a similar role. But more than that, genres themselves can adapt and evolve. Consider soap operas. Evolving out of radio, soap operas (so named because soap manufacturers sponsored and advertised soap during the programs) were fixtures of daytime television, with decades-old series like *Days of Our Lives* and *The Bold and the Beautiful* continuing to this day. In the 1980s, soap operas made it to primetime with lavish productions about wealthy elites, with *Dallas* and *Dynasty* enjoying enormous success (and ratings) worldwide. By the 1990s, soap operas remained a part of prime time schedules, but the casts were younger; these shows focused on teenagers, as in *Beverly Hills, 90120*, *Dawson's Creek*, *One Tree Hill* and later *Gossip Girl*. But in 2001 something strange happened; in part inspired by the success of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (matching elements of soap opera with horror), the series *Smallville* debuted, mixing elements of soap opera with superhero

action (the origins of Superman)—and ran for the next 10 years. Since then, the most recent iterations of soap opera have followed this pattern of blending the soap with the superheroes—shows like *Arrow* and *Flash*, an unexpected evolutionary step in the genre.

Reality

From 1792, zoos sought to recreate the original environments of their animals, and these modifications (for example, soil or turf on the floors of aviaries) continued into the second half of the 19th century. This slow process of naturalisation, culminating in zoos without bars, started to emerge after 1907, representing what actually occurred in the wild. Stellingen Zoo in Germany was one of the first of these ‘replacing the image of a confined animal with that of one at liberty’ (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 237), becoming what Baratay and Hardouin-Fugier term the ‘imitation of nature’ (2004: 265).

SURVEILLANCE

At the heart of most forms of reality television, and implicit in *Big Brother*’s reference to George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen-Eighty Four*, are modes of surveillance. Against the backdrop of the erosion of the private sphere by an ever-expanding public mediasphere (see Chapter 1), television has turned the cameras back on the audience, either ‘covertly’ (in series like *Big Brother* and *Gogglebox*) or overtly (where ordinary members of the public become stars in series like *America/Britain/Australia’s Got Talent* or *X Factor*).

Over the course of its evolution, television has similarly moved away from the wholly artificial towards realism. This move towards reality not only includes the increase in the popularity of documentaries (see the box, ‘Documentary films on television’), reality series (such as *MasterChef* and *The Block*) and do-it-yourself programs (*Better Homes and Gardens*), but also series such as *Dexter*, *Breaking Bad* and *The Sopranos*, which, it can be asserted, provide drama that is more real (the characters swear, have sex and engage in graphic violence) than that which is shown in the usual run of television programs. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, the reality conferred by television itself remains compelling to audiences:

Being ‘shown on TV’ [has become] the certificate of reality ... it is the condition of being real and that is why, when there are family events, to make sure they are real you put them on video. Being seen on a screen is the contemporary definition of being ‘really real’. What used to be a reflection of reality has become the standard of reality. (Bauman 2000)

Game of Thrones

US cable networks, such as HBO, operate under different broadcast standards from traditional networks, allowing them to tailor dramas for niche audiences without having to attract a diverse range of advertisers. These factors have led to some massive changes in what can be seen on-screen in terms of both content and language. This speaks to the relative freedom we mentioned above, that television provides for media practitioners to work with long-form narratives across



a range of diverse subject matters. A series like *True Detective*, for example, with its meditative philosophising, technical expertise behind the camera and sometimes graphic language and violence, would have been unthinkable even five years ago on network television.

Game of Thrones is perhaps the best standard bearer in this regard for how truly diverse television has become over the past decade. Not only does it continually push the boundaries with sex and violence, but it also makes a number of demands on its audience to keep track of a wide range of characters, locations and relationships. It also employs cinematic international location shooting and special effects, but, most of all, is based on a genre (fantasy) that has traditionally never succeeded in finding an audience on television. For all this, *Game of Thrones* enjoys high ratings for HBO, big DVD/Blu Ray and attendant merchandise sales and (as noted earlier) it remains the most illegally downloaded program in Australia.

But *Game of Thrones*'s truly lasting contribution to television, and ongoing debates around sex and violence, may be its notion of 'sexposition' (a term coined by critic and blogger Myles McNutt), where exposition is provided against a backdrop of sex and/or nudity. We do not encourage this practice in the academic environment.

Zoos and television are therefore 'interested in a new form of exhibition—an imaginary realm that simulates and stimulates the illusion of escape' (Baratay & Hardouin-Fugier 2004: 237). Increasingly, this has also led to more complex forms of television programming, from the genre-defying *Twin Peaks*, which made television more cinematic, to the intricately plotted *The Wire*, which was more like a Russian novel than a television program.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS ON TELEVISION

Documentary television programs have the power to expand on issues covered by news journalists. Since the 1960s, television has become an important medium for documentaries, enabling journalists to present long, filmed investigations of a single issue or event, in the style of CBS's *Harvest of Shame* (1960).

In Australia, the ABC's *Four Corners* (which started in 1961) set the benchmark for standards of investigative documentary television, producing influential films such as *The Moonlight State* (1987), which reported on alleged corruption within the Queensland police force and led to the establishment of a commission of inquiry into police corruption (see further information on *The Moonlight State* in Chapter 16).

Australian journalist John Pilger has also played an influential role in the promotion of documentary television programs, covering a host of geopolitical and social-justice issues, from the Vietnam War and the independence struggles in East Timor to refugee rights and the plight of Indigenous Australians.

Nicola Goc

Television and conservation

One scientific area that zoos could claim as their own was the preservation of species; today they implement breeding programs for pandas, snow leopards and Tasmanian devils, among many other endangered species.

Television is similarly engaged in the preservation of genres (think of the western being preserved by *Deadwood*, melodrama in soap opera and the musical in *Glee*), formats (talk shows and radio game shows) and stars (Keifer Sutherland in *24* and Patricia Arquette in *Medium*: film stars who revived their careers by starring in popular television programs). Appearances on television also preserve the performances of people long gone, for example, the classic clips of Elvis Presley from *The Ed Sullivan Show* or *The Beatles at the BBC*.

Perhaps, most importantly, it is the conservation of television series on DVD/Blu Ray that points the way forward for television as a media form. DVD/Blu Ray sales have saved many low-rating shows from cancellation (see Chapter 19), and DVD/Blu Ray is also becoming a way of accessing older series or providing new audiences with access to rarely seen series. The comedy spy series *Scarecrow and Mrs King*, for example, depicting the misadventures of a spy and a housewife forced to partner together (don't ask), originally ran from 1983 to 1987, but today has its own Facebook page as fans rediscover (and in many cases discover for the first time) the series on DVD/Blu Ray. Similarly, the ongoing popularity of series like science fiction drama *The X-Files*, superhero drama *Heroes* and sports comedy *Coach* in these formats has led to these series enjoying brief revivals on television with the original casts and showrunners.

DVD/Blu Ray releases create an archive, overcoming the transitory nature of television broadcasts; and as an archive, television can potentially exist as a cultural resource. Indeed, this seems to be the reason for the popularity of some of the digital free-to-air channels in Australia; 7mate, for example, featured a run of action series from the 1980s (*Airwolf*, *The A-Team* and *Knight Rider*) that have connected with a younger audience that would never have seen them previously, while also proving nostalgic for viewers who did. Channel Nine's Go! channel works in a similar way. In the USA, Warner Brothers has taken to releasing certain series (such as later seasons of soap operas, cartoons and obscure short-run shows) via a DVD-on-demand service, meaning that programs like *Falcon's Crest* and *Josie and the Pussycats in Space* are suddenly preserved and accessible as part of the cultural archive again.

Television as a cultural resource

So what does all of this mean for the future of television? As Alan McKee (2001) notes, television can potentially serve a number of useful social and cultural functions:

- *as a public and popular archive*, where analyses of television enables us to track the changing tastes and values of the culture
- *as a source of political critique*, not only through news and current affairs, but also through humour and satire
- *as the basis for a common language between people, regardless of geography, class or culture*, through which we can share a common language that we have learnt from *The Simpsons* or share the latest popular televisual catch phrase with people with whom we otherwise may have nothing in common.

Therefore, and regardless of the delivery system, television will continue to provide a window on the world and a way of thinking about the world.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Media scholar John Hartley famously suggested that television ‘stood in place of “the bard”: as the culture’s storyteller, oral historian and entertainer’ (Hartley, in Turner 2006: 7). Certainly this has been the case for many years.
- Television is founded on the principles of show business, flow and delay.
- Even if television’s position as the focal point of the mediasphere does change with the change in distribution systems (from television units to online delivery options and DVD/Blu Rays), there is no reason to think that these basic storytelling functions of television content will change.
- The function of television will remain recreational, although the business models behind it may change.
- Television performs an educational function as a useful research tool for classifying and acclimatising us to the world around us, and as an important way of conserving media traditions and ways of being.
- As television becomes a more on-demand service, it will become even easier to achieve these aims—though, perhaps, at the cost of the common language and diversity afforded to us during the last 50 years (invoking shadows again of Media 3.0—see the Introduction to this book).
- Television will remain a storyteller, finding new ways of sharing its stories.
- To paraphrase media theorist Marshall McLuhan, the message, it seems, will survive without the medium.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 How is television evolving?
- 2 Explain how the principles of flow and delay work in respect of some of your favourite television programs.
- 3 How do you watch television? On what platform? Does it change with different programs?
- 4 Why is television like a zoo? Do you agree with the ideas presented here?
- 5 How does television function as a cultural resource?

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8

PUBLIC RELATIONS: SPIN CYCLE

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

Public relations (PR) has a major role in the public sphere and anyone who works in the media will encounter it and need to understand it. There are two main ways to approach PR: from the point of view of a journalist, and from the point of view of a PR practitioner. While these are often held to be diametrically opposed positions, this is not necessarily the case, because they share a great deal of common ground. The reality is that many people who have trained in journalism—including some who have been successful journalists—do become PR people. People with journalism training have long been considered suitable for PR because of the very skills that made them good journalists, although it is important to note that PR involves far more than just media liaison. Journalists often face a steep learning curve when they shift to PR, as they must acquire a number of new skills. No matter where in the media you end up working, understanding this huge and growing phenomenon is going to help you. In fact, PR has huge implications for how our society functions, driving change and fundamentally altering the way human beings organise themselves. This chapter provides an overview of how PR operates, and advice to those on both sides of the line between the two professions.

In this chapter we look at:

- how public relations has developed as a societal force in the past 100 years
- how public relations has been encroaching onto media turf, particularly with the rise of ‘brand journalism’
- why media practitioners, and particularly journalists, should exercise caution when using the PR products
- the role of media releases and media conferences
- how PR practitioners and media professionals can fruitfully work together.

THE BIG PICTURE

The 20th century saw unprecedented change in Western society. At the start of that century, notions such as celebrity-style fame, economic globalisation and spin doctoring did not exist. Mass communication and rapidly developing corporate culture changed the landscape completely. Public relations as a discipline did not exist at the end of the 19th century, at least not in the way we think of it now. PR has been a recognised profession a little over 100 years and had its beginnings as a conscious form of activity not long before then.

PR occupies part of the mass communication continuum. Consequently, as mass communication has become increasingly important, so too has PR. Mass media demands information in many forms, and relentless pressures have been exerted on governments, organisations and businesses to provide information for an enormous variety of purposes.

How do you convince large numbers of people to give up smoking? How do you create a buzz around a particular product and make lots of people want to buy it? How do you engender an image for an organisation to target a particular demographic? How does a government persuade the governed to accept its policy platform? These questions, and many others like them, face public relations companies and practitioners. Put simply, their task is to manage information. The implications of this statement worry many people. Why should anyone manage the information people receive? Isn't it enough for them to be told the plain truth?

However, truth can be a tricky concept, as anyone in the information business can confirm. Philosopher and media commentator Noam Chomsky (Herman & Chomsky 1994) is known for challenging current ideas about reality and truth, and is famously associated with the concept of ‘manufacturing consent’, which echoes the related idea of ‘engineering consent’. These are both rather troubling terms that relate to the way information can be mass manipulated within a democratic system. Interestingly, Chomsky's term ‘**manufacturing consent**’ is intended to be derogatory, while ‘**engineering consent**’, made famous by Edward Bernays (the so-called father of PR), was merely intended to be informative.

#Manufacturing consent:

The way in which Western mass media act to subdue popular dissent and to assist in the realisation of political and corporate objectives while giving the illusion of freedom; coined in 1922 by US writer Walter Lippmann and popularised later by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman.

#Engineering consent:

According to Edward Bernays, the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses as part of the way democratic society functions.

THE CHOMSKY–HERMAN ‘PROPAGANDA MODEL’

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman deal with the manipulation of populations by Western media in their much-quoted text *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (1994). In this famous and controversial book, they introduce their ‘propaganda model’: their analysis of how



information is manipulated in democratic societies. They suggest several filters, such as ownership and the distorting properties of advertising, that represent systemic biases in mass media. One of the filters that influence what becomes news is the sourcing of information, and it is here that information management becomes a force in moulding the news agenda. As Chomsky and Herman (1994) write:

The magnitude of the public-information operations of large government and corporate bureaucracies that constitute the primary news sources is vast and ensure special access to the media. The Pentagon, for example, has a public-information service that involves many thousands of employees, spending hundreds of millions of dollars every year and dwarfing not only the public-information resources of any dissenting individual or group but also the aggregate of such groups.

PR'S BEGINNINGS

Humans have a long history of showing off and publicising themselves in various ways, but it was only in the 20th century that people started making formal careers out of it. Presumably, in the unsentimental world of corporate enterprise and government—sectors that employ armies of PR people—this is seen as money well spent. Why is it so important now to use PR? What is it about the modern world that makes PR an essential activity?

There are some high-minded answers about the need for PR, and these certainly have some legitimacy. For example, it is said that the modern democratic process survives only by public consent based upon freely available information. The more people know, the better equipped they will be to make sensible decisions. This is undoubtedly true. Public relations, by its nature, is a broadly based activity, and is not necessarily preoccupied with selling products. Anything that requires public consent is probably part of someone's PR strategic plan.

Public relations is not advertising, although advertising can form part of a PR person's kitbag. Advertising, in most (though not all) cases, is clearly recognisable paid image making. Advertising is Ronald McDonald singing a song (or running in a school race) to encourage children to take their parents to a McDonald's outlet. It is the annoying jingles used to flog cars, and endless interruptions to the cricket in summer, usually chicken-related.

PR is different. PR is the controlled release or exchange of information in various ways and through various outlets, most visibly through the news media. It may take the form of a conference, a public meeting or direct contact with decision makers. An organisation, whether a corporation, government department or interest group, has a public voice through its PR activities, contributing to the flux and flow of information. This activity goes beyond trading goods and services in the marketplace, although marketing activities are certainly linked.

Like so many features of modern Western culture, PR started in a professional sense in the USA. The person widely credited as being the first true PR practitioner was Edward L. Bernays, the nephew of Sigmund Freud (who was the father of his own field: psychoanalysis). Bernays was impressed by his Uncle Sigmund's world-changing theories and applied psychological techniques in his attempts to influence people on a mass scale (Tye 2002).

BERNAYS AND GOEBBELS

In a cruel twist, Edward Bernays's seminal book, *Crystallising Public Opinion* (1923), became the inspiration and handbook for Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels. Edward Bernays was Jewish and the Nazi regime was dedicated to destroying European Jews—and came close to succeeding. Goebbels is widely held to be an evil genius who refined propaganda into an indispensable tool of despotism. As Bernays (1965) said himself: 'Goebbels ... was using my book *Crystallising Public Opinion* as a basis for his destructive campaign against the Jews ... Obviously the attack on the Jews of Germany was no emotional outburst of the Nazis, but a deliberate planned campaign.'

Bernays was the first person to really pitch cigarette smoking to women, representing the practice as healthy and an aid to beauty and femininity, while deliberately linking it to notions of freedom and equality. Bernays organised a march in New York by women allegedly asserting their right to smoke, the famous Torches of Liberty Contingent. Bernays had been paid a lot of money by the American Tobacco Company, makers of Lucky Strike cigarettes, to promote cigarettes. He staged the march because he identified an enormous market—women—for whom it was at the time socially unacceptable to smoke in public. By dressing up the sales pitch in ideas of equality, he secured a whole new market for the product. This approach was hugely successful and guaranteed Bernays a long and lucrative career.

IVY LEE: ANOTHER FATHER OF PR?

The title 'father of PR' is sometimes also bestowed on a slightly earlier identity, the former journalist Ivy Lee (Bates 2006). Lee is said to have started the field of crisis management, although it wasn't called that then, putting the best spin on less-than-favourable circumstances. Some of this work led to him being nicknamed 'Poison Ivy'. Lee, with a colleague, founded a PR company as early as 1905. The company, Parker and Lee, was set up to publicise the activities of the big US industrialists, who were extremely unpopular and facing government regulation for the first time. He also worked for the coal industry and the railroads. He was noticed by the biggest industrialist of them all, oil magnate John D. Rockefeller, and created a new and more altruistic public image for this ruthless American tycoon. Later, Lee carried out PR, and other management functions, for the American Red Cross during the First World War, and later still campaigned for diplomatic recognition of the fledgling Soviet Union.

Like Edward Bernays, Lee had his reputation tainted by the Nazis. He worked in the early 1930s with an organisation seeking to improve US–German relations, which led to charges that he was a Nazi propagandist. Lee also wrote books on public relations, as did Bernays, and was a relentless self-promoter, providing quite a bit of prepared favourable material on himself for any interested journalist, as any good PR person is well placed to do. He died much younger than Bernays, aged only 57. Maybe this accounts for the fact that he is given less prominence than Bernays: he had less time to work on the spin.

A PROFESSION FOUNDED ON ENGINEERING CONSENT

While Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman were alarmed by the manipulation of the democratic process that they called ‘manufacturing consent’, Bernays saw ‘engineering consent’ as an informative term pointing to a useful phenomenon. He had what many would consider a rather undemocratic mindset, and saw nothing wrong with outright manipulation, as he outlined in his book, *Propaganda* (1928). Here is the opening passage from that book:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are moulded, our tastes are formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is the logical result of the way democratic society is organised. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society. (Bernays 1972)

The idea behind engineering consent is to make whatever it is you are trying to sell ‘the thing of the moment’—the current must-have—and this trick must be worked by subtle, public relations-based methods rather than straight advertising. For example, Bernays helped the brewing industry position beer as ‘the beverage of moderation’ (Gladwell 1998). And on behalf of the Mack truck company, he garnered national support for highway construction through front groups called the Trucking Information Service, the Trucking Service Bureau, and Better Living Through Increased Highway Transportation (Gladwell). This principle was completely new when Bernays propounded it, but it is so woven into the fabric of contemporary Western society that we can’t always see what is happening. Yet all of us are subjected to it every day.

Both Bernays and Lee began their activities at a time of rapid modernisation and the rise of capitalism on a global scale, the start of what later became known as ‘the American Century’, in which capitalism was triumphant. Their era encompassed the first of the world wars, which was itself a tragic reminder of how the world was becoming globalised, with positive and negative consequences. Communications grew more sophisticated, the media grew more widespread and important (particularly when radio began in the 1920s), and means of transportation grew faster and more readily available. All the things we associate with the modern era—electricity, cars, air transportation, the telephone and electronic media—had their beginnings at this time, and it is no coincidence that PR also was born then.

LONG LIFE

Edward Bernays died in 1995 at the age of 103 and was by all accounts lively and engaged until the end. His long life enabled him to see how the profession he had such a large part in starting had become a central management activity and a shaper of modern Western society. An interview conducted by academic Stuart Ewen not long before Bernays’ death (and recounted in his later book) revealed that he was fully aware of his own influence, perhaps to the point of arrogance. But he wasn’t especially impressed with what PR had become. To quote from the academic’s interview: “Today,” he related to

me with some dismay, “any nitwit or dope or anybody can call himself or herself a public relations counsel”.’ After interviewing the nearly-100-year-old Bernays, Ewan concluded:

Ideally, the job of public relations is not simply one of disseminating favorable images and impressions for a client. For Bernays and, as I would learn, for many others in the field, the goal was far more ambitious than that. Public relations was about fashioning and projecting credible renditions of reality itself (Ewen 1996).

PR IN AUSTRALIA

The first Australian described as a public persuasion practitioner was George FitzPatrick of Sydney. His career began just before the Second World War (Tymson, Lazar & Lazar 2000: 35). He listed himself in the Sydney phone book as a ‘registered practitioner in public persuasion, propaganda and publicity’, and organised public charities and various publicity activities for companies. The word ‘propaganda’ was freely used in connection with this activity back then, but the Second World War and the evil activities of Joseph Goebbels put an end to that usage. Two years after that war ended, there were just two PR-related telephone directory listings, but the industry started to grow as more businesses started to see the benefits of having their stories told in the media. The rise of PR in Australia created the need for a forum to allow the exchange of information between practitioners. The **Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA)**, held its first meeting (Tymson, Lazar & Lazar 2000: 36) in 1949, and this is regarded as the official start of public relations as a profession in Australia. The postwar era in Australia was a time of rising prosperity and consumerism, combined with political and economic stability. The new profession had found its ideal time to be born, and it thrived and grew.

#Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA): The peak professional body for PR practitioners in Australia.

PR EVOLVES

Inevitably, PR has evolved from its media-focused beginnings. While getting stories into media outlets remains an important activity, the contemporary industry sees itself as more subtle than that. The aim is not just scoring media hits (a measure of uptake of stories by the media); a more interactive process has developed, involving studying the demands of a variety of **publics** and devising ways to satisfy them. ‘Publics’ is a concept in PR circles that refers to different audience sectors, such as employees, investors, media, community sectors and government, all of which require separate communication skills, with an emphasis on two-way rather than unidirectional communication. PR practitioners study the way these sectors operate and communicate, and use what they know about them to enter into their conversations and thereby influence them.

The profession has gradually become more knowledgeable about what does or does not work in communication, developing and refining factors such as the psychological aspects of the audience’s interest, theories on how to persuade people and other evolving ideas about the way people think and make decisions. Given the foundations of the profession in the ideas of Sigmund

#Publics: In PR, a buzzword that refers to the different audience sectors, such as employees, investors, media, community sectors and government, that often require separate communication methods and skills, with emphasis on dialogue rather than one-way communication.

Freud, the rise of psychology as a professional discipline is important in this process. Freud was famous for drawing attention to the role of the unconscious in human behaviour, proposing that an unconscious element in the mind influenced consciousness in ways that are not readily apparent (Beystehner 1998). The growing field of psychology pointed to new prospects for understanding human behaviour, and thereby directing it or even controlling it. The behaviourist theories of B.F. Skinner, for example, also contributed ideas of stimulus and reward: people could be effectively influenced to behave like rats in mazes. Behaviourism suggested that they could be persuaded to spend their money on the shiny new car because the car gave them the reward of status. Unfortunately for the eager new public relations practitioners, they found that human behaviour does not necessarily fit all the formulae put forward. But enough data were being gathered on how people actually responded to public information to make it possible to direct and segment public opinion.

In the modern era, PR is at least as important as advertising; maybe even more so. As long as mass media has existed, advertising has been around. It is an inescapable feature of most successful businesses. But the continuing growth of advertising also brought a growth in cynicism in the market. The general public, and the various segments therein, do not regard advertising to be part of public information as such. Advertising is just seen as selling products by whatever means possible. PR takes a different approach, even if its goal is to sell products.

PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE PR

Proactive PR: Often called 'agenda setting'; the creation of a story, usually a positive story, where none existed; examples include calling a media conference to announce the establishment of a new award, or sending out a media release about the findings of a specially commissioned study.

Proactive PR (often called agenda setting) creates a story, usually a positive story, where none existed before, such as sending out a media release about the findings of a specially commissioned study or staging a glitzy launch of a new fashion label. Proactive PR contrasts with **reactive PR** that deals with events that have not been set in motion by the company or organisation itself, but which require a response. Among the triggers for reactive PR might be a disaster, a barrage of public criticism for an organisation, an industrial dispute or a court case. In this case the organisation has to respond, usually rapidly, to external factors. Both forms of PR are important for any organisation. Proactive PR help ensures that an organisation has a positive role in the public conversations. Reactive PR is a valuable function intended to recover from a crisis or otherwise make right something that has not gone to plan. The world is a complicated place and things do not always run according to an orderly script. Organisations frequently have to deal with adverse or potentially adverse circumstances.

Reactive PR: Public relations that responds to external events, including crises.

THE PR ROLE

PR people do many things: PR is a notably diverse profession. Among the tasks carried out by PR people are the following, adapted and expanded from Tymson, Lazar and Lazar (2000):

- advising management on strategies and policy issues
- developing a company's or organisation's public relations program
- answering public enquiries

- conducting internal communication courses, public relations workshops and media training
- advising the media of newsworthy events and arranging coverage, and being available to answer any media queries
- issuing media releases and statements
- providing journalists with 'background'
- managing an organisation's social media activities
- acting as a go-between for journalists in arranging interviews with spokespeople
- organising special events such as 'open days', tours and exhibitions
- writing and publishing newsletters, house magazines, annual reports, pamphlets and other publications
- monitoring public opinion and the company's and organisation's image and suggesting action where necessary
- assisting in editing and producing official company or organisation documents
- assisting the media when they attend meetings, news conferences, etc.
- overseeing and co-ordinating production of film or audiovisual material
- speech writing
- public speaking
- web design and content management
- managing stakeholder communication during an issue or crisis
- preparation of internal communication materials
- maintaining adequate files and records
- budgeting and planning communication activities
- evaluating communication performance and recommending improvements
- sourcing or taking photographs or moving images for use by media
- organising or conducting media training for senior managers.

TYPES OF PR PROFESSIONAL

There are two main types of PR practitioner. One kind is hired by an organisation as a staff member to work on behalf of that organisation and no other. Such people may be called PR officers, PR managers, communication managers, public affairs officers or a variety of similar titles. They are generally part of an organisation's management team, and they can be found in many sectors, such as corporate, government, non-government and community.

The other kind of PR practitioner belongs to a **consultancy** or agency. These are companies expressly set up to be available for hire to undertake public relations activities. A PR consultancy might have a large number of clients from diverse sectors, and will spread the work among its consultants.

#PR consultancy:

A company set up specifically to carry out contract PR work, in contrast to a PR person who is on the staff of a company or organisation.

THE RISE AND RISE OF PR

The pace of change in public relations has been accelerating recently. The profession has absorbed social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter as part of its endeavour to be present in all forms of communication. Few major companies or organisations today do not have

some sort of presence in social media, alongside more traditional avenues. The aim is often to get a positive story 'trending' or 'going viral' on the social media, giving prominence—if only fleetingly—to an idea or a product. Indeed, **brand journalism** is one of the fastest growing areas in contemporary PR practice, and it challenges mainstream journalism head on (see the box 'ANZ, *Blue Notes* and "brand journalism" later in the chapter).

Because PR has been so willing to adapt and change approaches as new methods become available, and because trade in information has become dominant in the 21st century, this sector appears unstoppable. Some commentators predict that PR will drive the policy of many large organisations in the future, rather than remaining as just one of several important factors. The need to communicate will be the main focus of any sort of strategic management, and the means to do so will continue to evolve as they have always done alongside the evolution in communications technology.

Is the dominance of PR a good thing? What do you think? Is this a case of companies and other organisations going for appearance over substance, or is it just a reflection of the desire to give consumers and/or citizens exactly what they want? Given that we are now firmly in the information age, it does seem a natural consequence for the forces of communication to rise to the top. Information implies communication, and that is essentially what PR is.

PRESENTING A CONSISTENT IMAGE

Not all public relations is concerned with selling products; some is related to securing informed public consent for certain activities. The public relations activities of the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS), for example, have been devised specifically to present a consistent set of views that accord with organisational goals. AIMS' public image is based on its public stance on tropical marine science and Australia's marine resources, including the Great Barrier Reef. Journalists may well seek out AIMS's input when writing stories about anything to do with Australia's tropical marine environment because the organisation has ensured, through its PR effort, that journalists know that it is available to comment. This powerful process has helped to establish AIMS as an authority in this field.

JOURNALISTS: TAKE CARE

For the media practitioner, there are advantages and pitfalls in using public relations material. One of the main contacts media people have with PR people is through the **media release**. A media release is prepared by a public or private agency, group or person to inform the media about the specific activities, opinions or reactions of an organisation. This document is a way of managing the release of information, which has advantages and disadvantages for the journalist who wants to get to the truth of a story. Large numbers of media releases arrive in newsrooms every day, usually by email.

Of course, media releases emphasise news (or something that looks like news) that reflects favourably on the institution or individual for whom it was prepared. They are not always written

Brand journalism:

form of public relations in which companies use the tools of digital publishing and social media to speak directly to consumers, often by employing successful former journalists and running in-house newsrooms.

Media release:

document, written by a PR practitioner in a journalistic style, that provides a story intended for use by the media.

with deliberate bias or distortion, but a journalist should always be careful when using them. The advantage is that they may distil lots of complex information into a readily understood form. The journalist is rarely an expert in any field, and may need guidance through the intricacies of, for example, medical research, engineering or public policy.

Information provided by expert organisations such as the CSIRO, the Institution of Engineers or a university's public affairs office can helpfully bring out the pertinent information to save the reporter valuable time and to clarify facts of a story, when they might otherwise be decidedly unclear. This time-saving aspect is important for busy reporters. Such PR can also save the reporters the embarrassment of forming the wrong conclusions about complex information that they might have assessed quickly and not properly understood.

The rise of the PR professional has meant that, to a certain extent, the news agenda is set by organisations and individuals outside the traditional news arena, and in most cases their first priority is not the public good. Too often, media releases from big companies, government departments, agencies and organisations are taken at face value and run as news: the term often used is that they are **cut and pasted** from media releases. When stories are merely cut and pasted from media releases, the journalist has not used initiative and a news sense to find the news, and this has an effect on the quality of the media product over time. Cutting and pasting is not journalism.

The rise of PR has changed news media. At present in the USA, it is estimated that PR practitioners outnumber journalists by a ratio of four to one (Greenslade 2012). That trend is echoed in other Western nations, including Britain and Australia. While PR is a huge and growing industry, news reporting has diminished somewhat in recent years, and newsroom resources are often stretched to the limit. Therefore, there is an unfortunate tendency in newsrooms to rely on PR material to provide content for news items. This practice has the effect of letting PR practitioners, rather than members of the news media, decide what is going to be news.

#Cut and paste: The transfer of information, by a journalist, from a PR release to a news item, without the application of journalistic editing skills or judgment.

PR AND THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA IN AUSTRALIA

A 2010 investigation into the interaction between PR and the media in Australia, conducted jointly by the website *Crikey* and the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ) at the University of Technology Sydney, found that more than half the stories published in ten newspapers in the mainstream media were sourced from PR materials. The newspaper with the highest number of stories from PR was the *Daily Telegraph*, with 70 per cent at the time of the survey. Head of the ACIJ, Wendy Bacon, said: 'Our investigation strongly confirms that journalism in Australia today is heavily influenced by commercial interests selling a product, and constrained and blocked by politicians, police and others who control the media message' (Crikey 2010).

However, journalists can certainly make use of public relations material, including media releases and backgrounders, and attend PR-convened media conferences, and still maintain their all-important independence. Good journalists ensure that they are not being beguiled by the easy option that PR presents and still carry out the checking and digging that should be instinctive to all reporters.



MEDIA RELEASES

PR practitioners are trained to write media releases exactly like a news story. These documents usually display the journalistic convention of one sentence per paragraph, use direct quotations in the same way reporters do, and are written in the inverted pyramid form. This format is specifically intended to make it easy for the journalist to place the contents of the media release into the news outlet; that is, to cut and paste. Like it or not, getting a media release cut and pasted into a news outlet is a desirable outcome of the PR activity.

Many PR professionals have worked as journalists before switching professions. At the very least, they would have been trained in journalistic practice, and the most successful ones adopt the same writing forms to gain access to the media. For straightforward informational media releases, this may not be too much of a problem, although it remains undesirable for media outlets to accept this material at face value and without input from other sources.

The main problem arises when information is being spun, often by a **spin doctor**. This is where organisations or individuals present information designed to show them in the best possible light. The spin doctor's professional expertise is the selective use of information and subtle manipulation of emphases. **Spin** may not involve outright lying (it rarely does), but is more likely to be found in the information that has been omitted, the tone that has been adopted and the way some elements have been played down and others emphasised. Information is prepared to look like an objective, dispassionate news story, but in fact is seriously skewed in favour of a vested interest.

Using media releases as a starting point for a story is generally acceptable in the media. However, journalists should always speak to a human being and not just rely upon direct quotations in the PR release. Releases will always contain contact details to reach the people named. Use those details to get direct comment from the source. Not to do so means that you are allowing yourself to be manipulated by the PR person who wrote the release. You also must find balancing points of view, perhaps contrary to the information in the media release. Never take media releases as the whole truth, because they probably are not. A good journalist is sceptical, and checks everything. A good journalist is also energetic and not content to let PR people do the work for them.

MEDIA CONFERENCES

Another form of interaction between the media and PR is the media conference, also known as the news conference, which is a long-established method for releasing news to a lot of journalists in one go (see Tools 2 for more on conducting a media conference). A media conference is one of the media's big set-piece events, where a source is questioned by a room full of reporters.

SIR JOH'S CHOOKS

The late Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the legendary former premier of Queensland, memorably described media conferences as 'feeding the chooks', a term that conveys something of the atmosphere of a feeding frenzy that can be found at such events—as well as the contempt in which he held members of the Fourth Estate.

Spin doctors: A person who is employed to bend information to fit the needs of their employers or clients, often beyond what a PR person might normally do; usually relates to political communication.

Spin: The process whereby an organisation or individual ensures that information placed into the public sphere, usually through a PR channel, puts them in the best possible light. This word has a negative connotation, as it implies information manipulation.



Media conferences remain an important means for relaying information from entertainers, sportspeople, and leaders of industry, science and business; however, they are becoming less common in the political sphere. Nowadays, many politicians stage ‘door stops’ at the entrance to parliament—an informal, impromptu media gathering—or they make policy announcements on talkback radio or via Twitter or Facebook. At political media conferences, the questioning is more likely to be adversarial, which can be risky for politicians, who will have more difficulty controlling the spin of their particular message.

Still, media conferences are an integral part of a journalist’s work. You need to overcome any fears you have about speaking up in front of a room full of people, because you need to pose your questions to the subject of the media conference. If you don’t, the more assertive journalists will monopolise proceedings. Journalists should steer the course of the conference by preparing strong, effectively worded questions that are confidently stated. By all means write questions down in your notebook, but also listen carefully to what is being said at the conference, and ensure that you don’t miss an unexpected angle should it arise. Try to keep your questions short and to the point: rambling, multifaceted questions tend to be ineffective, and possibly ambiguous or even laughable.

ADVICE FOR THE PR PRACTITIONER

The media and PR can and do work harmoniously, though not in all cases. Media practitioners routinely deride PR people, often using the derogatory term ‘flack’ or saying that journalists have gone over to the dark side. A typical comment about PR people, specifically those who specialise in science, was broadcast by Robyn Williams, the ABC radio *Science Show* presenter, on 24 October 2004. He said: ‘Do you know about the dark side? It’s what journalists have to do if they can’t report and need to promote instead. A job’s a job. For every science journalist in Australia there are between ten and twenty working in PR, members of the dark side’ (Williams 2004). This dismissive view is widespread among journalists. But survey after survey shows that much of the content of newspapers and electronic media news would not exist without PR material. Today, reporters phone PR practitioners as often as PR practitioners phone reporters. Instead of sniping, a more fruitful approach is for media practitioners to accept that PR is a fact of life, and for PR people to ensure that their behaviour displays high ethical standards.

On the day-to-day level, the ethical management of information is a useful job and not to be mocked. This kind of work helps those outside the organisation make sense of incoming information. This is especially the case for dealings between a PR practitioner and a hard-pressed journalist, who does not have time to process all relevant information and still produce a coherent story. An ethical PR person is expected to anticipate the needs of the journalist and prepare adequate and succinct material.

The ethical PR person is a middle person, an interpreter, a service provider, an information coordinator and an adviser. The PR person’s employer expects him or her to provide a window to the world, perhaps tidied up and prettified, but essentially useful and clear. They are also expected to advise senior management on presenting themselves and their key messages, and possibly on improving interdepartmental communication. Increasingly, the PR practitioner is part of senior management, reflecting PR’s growing societal role.

#Flack: A term often used to describe PR practitioners; thought to have been formed by melding ‘flak’:—for flak catcher; someone paid to catch the flak directed at their employer—with ‘hack’, a mediocre writer.

ANZ, BLUE NOTES AND 'BRAND JOURNALISM'

The line between PR and media in Australia became a little blurred in 2014 with the launch of *Blue Notes* by one of the 'big four' Australian banks, ANZ. *Blue Notes* is an online publication created entirely within the ANZ organisation by a team that includes several prominent ex-journalists. The editor is Walkley Award-winning journalist Andrew Cornell. *Blue Notes* breaks stories and uses journalistic methods and language. Known as 'brand journalism', this activity is likely to increase as big organisations recognise and attempt to exploit the cache attached to journalistic practice.

According to ANZ's group head of strategic content and digital media, Amanda Gomes:

We have a corporate newsroom that draws upon the expertise in the bank and outside. We've got subeditors and a publishing hub. We've got a video studio. It's really well-resourced. There are a number of journalists, Andrew [Cornell], and a contributor budget as well. If you were there you wouldn't feel it was that different from a normal newsroom.' (Sinclair 2014)

ANZ's initiative follows similar moves by big US companies such as HSBC's *Business Without Borders* and software company Cisco's *The Network*. Brand journalism has been a phenomenon in the US since 2009 'when former *Financial Times* journalist and media analyst Tom Foremski famously declared "every company has to become a media company"' (Oliver 2014).

Brand journalism will probably always face credibility issues to a certain extent, even as it becomes more widespread: 'While *Blue Notes* may have pinched a few journalists to run its newsroom, it appears it can't replicate the trust inherent a publication such as the AFR [Australian Financial Review] has earned [at least yet]' (Oliver 2014).

Media journalists tend to pride themselves upon their independence and commitment to digging up the truth, especially when it has been obfuscated by PR professionals. This antipathy towards PR people often produces a cat-and-mouse game as journalists try to either dodge official messages or hold them up to ridicule. Even so, the PR person is often the journalist's first source for readily accessible information, resulting in a somewhat disingenuous attitude on the part of journalists who are perfectly prepared to use PR's helpful services while simultaneously deriding them and their profession.

CONCLUSION

While media practitioners may sometimes sneer at PR people, they are demonstrably happy to use PR materials. The widespread use of information generated by PR people is, of course, partly needed because of the declining number of journalists as newsroom budgets are cut. One manifestation of this trend is brand journalism, where PR directly creates and distributes news. Some PR material is also newsy, useful and fits the media agenda, as it is designed to do. Journalists have the responsibility to ensure that the information is balanced with contrary opinion or fact. No one can really blame the PR practitioner if the journalist doesn't complete the extra information-checking-and-gathering steps while preparing a story.

These are the two main sides of the argument, and both are partly right. Some PR is concerned with image manipulation, spinning messages, blatant stonewalling (offering 'No comment' to all enquiries) or even (rarely) with lying. However, public relations practitioners contribute greatly to the availability of easily accessible information and in doing so perform a valuable function. Companies and other organisations have to engage with the information demands of modern society, and the best way to do this is via trained, skilful people who can manage the information exchange between experts and the general public, often via the media but also via many other avenues as well. Part of the PR person's job is simply that of translator. PR practitioners who recognise this important task and do it well are the ones cherished by journalists, even if the journalists don't often admit it.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- PR may be approached from the point of view of a journalist, and from the point of view of a PR practitioner.
- While these are often held to be diametrically opposed positions, this is not necessarily the case, because they share much common ground.
- Public relations occupies part of the mass communication continuum. Consequently, as mass communication has become increasingly important, so too has PR.
- The concepts of ‘manufacturing consent’ and ‘engineering consent’ relate to the way information can be mass manipulated within a democratic system and are important in understanding the phenomenon of PR.
- PR had two controversial ‘fathers’: Edward Bernays and Ivy Lee. The first Australian PR practitioner was George FitzPatrick of Sydney, from just before the Second World War. He listed himself in the Sydney phone book as a ‘registered practitioner in public persuasion, propaganda and publicity’.
- The Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA), held its first meeting in 1949, and this is regarded as the official start of PR as a profession in Australia.
- ‘Publics’ is a concept in PR circles that refers to different audience sectors, such as employees, investors, media, community sectors and government, all of which require separate communication skills.
- PR has absorbed social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter as part of its endeavour to be present in all forms of communication.
- The rise of the PR professional has meant that the news agenda is increasingly set by organisations and individuals outside the traditional news arena.
- The ethical PR person is a middle person, an interpreter, a service provider, an information coordinator and an adviser.
- The PR person is often the journalist’s first source for readily accessible information.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Define what Edward Bernays means by ‘engineering consent’ and what did Chomsky and Herman mean by ‘manufacturing consent’. What do these terms mean in public relations? What are the differences and similarities in the terms?
- 2 Why do journalists often dislike public relations practitioners?
- 3 What are the main points of difference between advertising and public relations?
- 4 Looking through a newspaper, see if you can identify stories that appear to have been based upon a media release. What are the major distinguishing characteristics?
- 5 Find an example of a company or organisation that has a high ‘PR profile’. How do these companies use PR to create and maintain a profile?

- 6 Visit the ANZ *Blue Notes* site (<https://bluenotes.anz.com>). Note the kind of stories published on the site and to what extent they appear 'journalistic'.
- 7 Obtain information about a PR agency, company or consultancy and prepare a report about its philosophy and activities, based upon research and an email interview. Choose a company that specialises in PR (do not choose a PR department within an organisation) and complete the following steps:
 - a Visit the company's website and analyse its content to illuminate the way the company presents itself to the world. Your analysis might include such elements as the visual imagery the company uses, the kinds of services it offers (such as 'issues management' or 'perception management') and any specialities that it may indicate (such as high-tech or business-oriented public relations).
 - b Obtain at least one media release from the company and briefly analyse its approach, looking at such matters as: whether and how it uses journalistic language; what techniques you think are being used to attract the attention of journalists; what you might do differently if you had been assigned to this task; and whether you think the story angle is clear.
 - c Seek an email interview with a PR consultant who works with the company. You should first find the name and contact details of a PR professional, and write a brief and polite introductory email explaining who you are and what you want to do. Then, if you receive a positive response, compose a series of questions. Give your questions careful thought, and encompass such matters as how the company positions itself in the market, how it goes about achieving outcomes for its clients, examples of accounts held (some companies treat this as confidential, which is an important fact in itself); what the individual approach of the person you are questioning is to their tasks; and any other related issues that interest you. Write a brief reflection on what the person had to say.
- 8 Write an essay on one of the following topics:
 - a Analyse how a well-known company has managed a specific PR crisis. Possible subjects might be Nike's image problems regarding third-world labour, Johnson & Johnson's Tylenol poisoning crisis or the various problems besetting Qantas in recent years (such as the airline grounding in 2011). Analyse and critique the approach of the company to this particular event.
 - b How do Australian political parties conduct their crisis management? Select one example of a recent political crisis and track the way the party managed (or mismanaged) it through its release of information. The two major Australian political parties, the Australian Labor Party and the Liberal Party, have both experienced significant crises both in and out of government in recent years.
 - c Define and discuss the main themes of the critique of public relations as exemplified by the work of Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, authors of *Toxic Sludge Is Good For You: Lies, Damn Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (1995) and *Weapons of Mass Deception: The Uses of Propaganda in Bush's War on Iraq* (2003). What is the essence of their criticism of PR, and how has the PR industry responded?
 - d How has public relations influenced the conduct of military campaigns by Western governments? Focus upon one recent conflict (for example, Kosovo, Iraq or Afghanistan) or

you may compare an earlier campaign with a more recent one. One possible combination might be comparing the media management of the Vietnam War with either the Gulf War of the early 1990s or the Iraq war of 2003.

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CASE STUDY 2

'If That Doesn't Suit You, Get Out': Three Minutes at the Crossroads of Army Communication

Liz Tynan

Introduction

In June 2013, the (then) chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General David Morrison, did something extraordinary. He recorded a three-minute YouTube video titled 'Chief of Army message regarding unacceptable behaviour'; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QaqpoeVgr8U>. And just like that, he began a culture change. That three-minute clip (see the transcript below), in all its controlled outrage, marked a turning point for the Australian Army. By then, Morrison had had enough—every week it seemed brought new stories about misogyny and abuse in the ranks of the military. On the day the clip was uploaded, the latest scandal involving a large number of army personnel (the 'Jedi Council'; see below), including senior officers, was the immediate trigger for Morrison's actions. The power of the YouTube clip, scripted by then-Lieutenant Colonel Cate McGregor (also an extraordinary part of this story; see below), goes beyond the words. The way he delivered those words lives in the memory of anyone who watches it.

There could be no doubt in anyone's mind that this was the announcement of a cultural shift. The fact that he chose to draw the line using social media showed conclusively how mature this form of communication has become in Australian public life. If a highly resistant and entrenched culture such as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) could be reached through YouTube, communication in this country had indeed changed fundamentally. While Morrison adopted the strong tone of any senior military man talking to his troops, exactly what he said and the medium through

which he said it were profoundly different from what had come before.

Abuse in the Australian military

Physical and sexual abuse in the Australian military has a long history, but in recent times several cases have attracted particular public attention. In March 2011, a young female Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) cadet had consensual sex with an army cadet at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in Canberra. What this young woman did not know was that the army cadet had arranged for his mates to watch via Skype. When this event became public, it came to be known as the Skype sex scandal. After the woman, known publicly as 'Kate', took her story to the media, then-defence minister for the Labor government Stephen Smith launched seven reviews and one high-level inquiry (Brissenden & McDonald 2014). While sex and abuse scandals were certainly nothing new, the Skype incident seemed to capture public and government attention more than most and the issue quickly escalated.

The following year, Morrison was interviewed on ABC radio's *AM* current affairs program. He was already beginning to establish and develop his public position on culture change in the military, to make the culture more inclusive of women, gay people and others not traditionally associated with the military. 'I think that a lot of our women are impatient for this [culture change] and are very appropriately pushing for it to happen. And that's terrific and we will give them every opportunity to do that. Will it cancel out and



investigate any unfortunate incidents in the future? Unlikely. Human nature is human nature, irrespective of whether it's dressed in uniform or without' (Morrison 2012).

The Skype incident was followed by the notorious 'Jedi Council' affair, the direct trigger for Morrison's YouTube clip. The Jedi Council was made up of a group of about seventeen ADF officers (up to the rank of lieutenant colonel) who ran highly offensive social media webpages, particularly on Facebook, that demeaned women and expressed religious and cultural bigotry. They also filmed themselves having sex with women, apparently without the consent of the women, then shared the footage within the group, along with demeaning commentary about the women (Wroe 2013).

The ABC TV current affairs show *Four Corners* has conducted major journalistic investigations into military sex abuse and has run two programs on this issue in recent times. The first, titled 'Culture of Silence', which aired on 16 June 2011, examined the Skype case and also revealed several hitherto unreported cases of sexual abuse dating back decades. Then, on 9 June 2014, *Four Corners* again ventured into this territory with 'Chamber of Horrors'. The program uncovered more cases of rape and sexual assault from the 1990s where the alleged perpetrators were either serving ADF officers, or were still working for the Department of Defence. The problem has been shown conclusively to be systemic, requiring strong leadership and a major culture shift.

Lt-Gen Morrison's YouTube clip

As these endless revelations were becoming a serious public problem for the Australian military, and Morrison chose to act by preparing a YouTube video. This tightly scripted, 100-word diatribe is alive with righteous outrage. In fact, this script is a lesson in the power of carefully chosen words. Apart from inviting those members of the Army who did not accord respect to women in their ranks to 'get out', the clip is also famous for the quote, 'The standard you talk past is the standard you accept'. In this succinct and beautifully crafted line, Morrison encapsulated a profound

philosophical truth: that not doing something is the same as doing something. Looking away is no longer good enough, he is saying. The culture shift he is expecting does not just involve not doing bad things; it also involves not ignoring other people doing bad things. The new standard established by these words is a powerful call for change.

As of the beginning of 2015, the Morrison speech had been viewed more than 1.5 million times. The video has truly 'gone viral'. Its clear message cut through, and it has been discussed and debated in many forms of mainstream and social media ever since. A senior man in uniform on a new media platform drawing a battle line and signalling a culture shift captured an audience. As Morrison said soon after during an SBS interview, 'I've got lots of faults, but ambiguity is not one of them' (Morrison 2013). The plain language and lack of ambiguity no doubt contributed to the clip's popularity. Incredibly, and possibly for the first time in history, a military leader became a feminist hero. Australian feminist commentator Jane Caro commented: 'Feminist heroes turn up in the unlikeliest places, that's what keeps my hope alive' (Olding 2013). Morrison retired as chief of the Australian Army in May 2015, leaving a formidable legacy as an agent of change.

The story got a run in the USA as well, a country with a similar history of abuse and misogyny in its military. One outlet that covered it, *Salon*, introduced its story on the Morrison video with the words, 'This is how you talk about military sex abuse: A blistering message from a general gets everything right' and said that Morrison had shown the way for US military leaders. To quote the author, Mary Elizabeth Williams, 'Holeeee. Effing. Crap. It's brilliant.' (Williams 2013). Her response captures the surprise and shock many felt when the video was released, as well as the sense of the timeliness of the message.

That message was not just delivered by YouTube. Lt-Gen Morrison also gave some high-profile speeches on the same topic, and with more depth and information than his three-minute YouTube clip contained. They were important to



flesh out his thinking on the topic, but in the end the impact was created by those three minutes—and the ripples are still being felt.

In an interview of SBS TV a couple of weeks after the YouTube clip was uploaded, Morrison said that he was seeking nothing less than a seismic cultural shift:

This is a cultural issue and it's a systemic cultural issue and, therefore, you have got to tackle it in a systemic way, and the way you do that is you start a very open dialogue, conversation, with your workforce, which in my case is 50,000 people so, you know, sometimes it's a bit hard to try to get that message across, which goes back to the reason for the video ... But having said that ... I am absolutely certain that we here not just on the right path. We're actually getting the results we need.' (Morrison 2013)

Cate McGregor

One of the reasons the Morrison YouTube clip was so successful was because the words had an emotional resonance that is rare in military communication. The author, Cate McGregor, is credited with imbuing the speech with an uncommon depth. At the time of the video, McGregor held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Australian Army. In mid 2014, she moved to the RAAF where she now holds the rank of Group Captain and where she is working on projects for the chief of the Air Force. Group Captain Cate McGregor was once Malcolm McGregor, and quite well known in political, cricket and military circles. She is now the most senior transgender officer in the Australian military. Her decision to transition from Malcolm to Cate was the subject of an episode of *Australian Story* on ABC in 2014. Her background gave force to the words spoken by Lt-Gen Morrison, particularly those to do with inclusiveness and acceptance of difference. As Morrison said, 'She had delivered this fantastic speech that needed only for me to add my personal commitment to it' (Morrison, quoted in

Warhaft 2014). The words, the delivery, the background and, indeed, the personal commitment, came together in three minutes of outstanding communication.

Transcript of the Morrison YouTube speech

Earlier today I addressed the media and through them the Australian public about ongoing investigations into a group of officers and NCOs whose conduct, if proved, has not only brought the Australian army into disrepute, but has let down every one of you, and all of those whose past service has won the respect of our nation. There are limits to how much I can tell you because the investigations into this network by both the New South Wales police and the ADF Investigative Service are ongoing. But evidence collected to date has identified a group of men within our ranks who have allegedly produced highly inappropriate material demeaning women and distributed it across the internet and Defence's email networks. If this is true then the actions of these members are in direct contravention to every value the Australian Army stands for. By now, I assume you know my attitude to this type of conduct. I have stated categorically many times that the Army has to be an inclusive organisation in which every soldier, man and woman, is able to reach their full potential and is encouraged to do so. Those who think that it is okay to behave in a way that demeans or exploits their colleagues have no place in this Army. Our service has been engaged in continuous operations since 1999, and in its longest war ever in Afghanistan. On all operations, female soldiers and officers have proven themselves worthy of the best traditions of the Australian Army. They are vital to us maintaining our capability now and into the



future. If that does not suit you, then get out. You may find another employer where your attitude and behaviour is acceptable, but I doubt it. The same goes for those who think that toughness is built on humiliating others. Every one of us is responsible for the culture and reputation of our army and the environment in which we work. If you become aware of every individual degrading another then show moral courage and take a stand against it. No one has ever explained to me how the exploitation or degradation of others enhances capability or honours the traditions of the Australian Army. I will be ruthless in ridding the Army of people who cannot live up to its values, and I need every one of you to support me in achieving this. The standard you walk past is the standard you accept. That goes for all of us, but especially those who by their rank have a leadership role. If we are a great national institution, if we care about the legacy left to us by those who served before us, if we care about the legacy we leave to those who, in turn, will protect and secure Australia, then it is up to us to make a difference. If you're not up to it, find something else to do with your life. There is no place for you amongst this band of brothers and sisters.

Conclusion

Institutions will, in the end, use whatever works to get their message across. Public relations and public communication have been transformed in recent years by the disruptions caused by social media. While the most influential of the

social media—Facebook, Twitter and YouTube—began at the individual, personal level and still to a certain extent involve sharing the minutiae of personal experience, increasingly these media are being used for rather different purposes, including mass communication. The ADF has a big task in changing a culture that has tended to exclude and even persecute women and others who do not match the traditional military image. In 2013, it was forced to act as the reputational damage done by successive scandals grew ever more toxic. The result was three minutes of communication that rode the zeitgeist and ensured that the message reached its target, and well beyond.

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TOOLS 2

How to Conduct a Media Conference

Liz Tynan

Introduction

One of the great set pieces in public relations practice is the **media conference**. Media conferences are a bit like a stage play in that they involve setting up a suitable venue, scripting, rehearsals, planning, obtaining an audience and putting on a performance. They should not be done half-heartedly; you must plan every stage to optimise the process. Being slapdash is anathema to this work. Bad things can happen if the event is not carefully worked out—never forget that you are dealing with demanding and impatient media practitioners who don't like to be mucked about. However, getting all the ducks to line up and presenting an effective media conference is the source of much job satisfaction for PR professionals. A media conference should also be useful and efficient for reporters, providing them with streamlined delivery of a strong news story.

#Media conference:

A PR event in which a major news announcement is made to assembled journalists. The announcement is usually followed by journalists questioning the news source.

Assessing whether to hold a media conference

The most important factor in this decision can be simply expressed: is your announcement newsworthy? Only through a thorough understanding of news values (see Chapter 12) will you be able to make the call. Journalists will not come to an event that does not carry the promise of a true media story. You must have something of substance to report and you must provide the information in a media-friendly way. You must also be clear that a media conference, which involves briefing a number of journalists at once, is the best way to make your story known. You may at this point give some thought to whether your story might be best announced through electronic distribution of a media release alone or by simply briefing a key journalist. If you decide that you need to have a room full of journalists potentially asking difficult questions of the spokespeople you put in front of them, then proceed.

The basic elements

Assuming that you have a newsworthy story to announce, there are a number of elements that you need to consider (and to manage) to ensure that everything comes together at the appointed time. These are outlined below.

- *Setting a date.* The exact date of your media conference will be determined by the news value of timeliness. If you have a government report, a major research finding or an important book coming out on a particular day, that is the day the media conference must be held—not the day after, or the day after that. Some senior managers have been known to try to put off a media conference until a day that *they* prefer, in the mistaken belief that holding out will intensify interest in the story. As a PR professional, you will have to do your best to convince them otherwise. Timeliness of provision of information is of utmost important and journalists may well ignore your otherwise impeccably organised event if the story actually happened the day before.

- *Setting a time.* Generally you will schedule your media conference for mid-morning to help ensure that there is ample time for all kinds of journalists—electronic and print—to prepare the story for their deadlines later in the day. You don't want it to be too early, though, as newsrooms tend to have their news meetings to assign the day's tasks around 8am to 8.30am. Most proactive public relations media conferences—the kind where you are introducing a story to the news agenda, not responding to outside events or a crisis—tend to be held within the timeframe of 9.30am to 11am. You are asking for trouble (and indifference) if you schedule your event for 4pm. Any announcement made at that time would have to be of broad national importance to be picked up. Note that most media conferences are quick: generally, you will not need more than one hour for the whole event, and sometimes less than that. The formal part of the event, in which your spokespeople make the actual announcement and give brief statements about issues, should be no more than 15 minutes. The longer part of the event involves media questions and one-on-one interviews.
- *Identifying and booking a suitable venue.* The venue should be a room that is large enough to cope with all potential participants but not too large that it looks sparsely populated to the attendees, or on the television news. You may want to consider a venue that offers good visuals of various kinds so that television can get overlay and/or decent backgrounds—examples of these settings include art galleries, museums, aquariums and sports stadiums. In most cases you will provide chairs for media representatives as they usually take notes, which is hard to do standing up. It is standard practice to provide simple refreshments of some kind—usually coffee, tea, orange juice and biscuits—but don't bother offering full meals. Someone in the PR department or agency (usually the PR person responsible for the event) will need to obtain costings for the refreshments and ensure that people are on hand to set up, serve and remove them. Also, you may need to investigate a suitable sound system and recording facilities so that the speakers can be heard and so that you can keep your own electronic record of the event. Be wary of holding media conferences outdoors without some sort of shelter. If you are determined to hold an outdoor event, it may be safest to set up a waterproof marquee and, if the worst happens and there is a thunderstorm, have an alternative indoor venue available that can be pressed into action at short notice.
- *Sending out a media alert.* This brief (two- to three-paragraph) document, which is described in more detail later, is a mini media release that functions as an invitation. It should not give away too much about the actual announcement, but be informative enough to ensure media interest. Send it up to a week before the actual media conference, and no later than the day before. Your **media alert** should state clearly and boldly exactly when and where the conference is to be held. Always keep it simple and provide a map if necessary.
- *Preparing the main media release.* This should follow normal media release format, and either be distributed electronically under embargo earlier in the day or handed to journalists as soon as they arrive at the media conference so that they are prepared for the talking heads and are able to start formulating questions. You may also wish to prepare other items of background information, such as reports or tables, for inclusion in a media kit. More detail on media releases and media kits appears below.
- *Identifying and briefing the spokespeople.* Most likely you will have at least one senior person from your organisation or company in attendance to speak and to answer questions. In some cases, you will have a high-profile person such as a government minister as well. Having more than one

Media alert: Also known as a 'diary note'; a document used by PR practitioners to alert journalists and editors to an upcoming event, often a media conference or a speech by a prominent person. It is a form of invitation tailored to the needs of the media, and is generally distributed by email or facsimile between a week and one day before the event.

authoritative person sitting at the front making the announcement is a good idea. You should not be making any announcements yourself; as a PR person you are the facilitator rather than the source. Ensure that everyone involved at your end understands the key points that must be relayed through the media conference—you do not want a situation in which people are contradicting each other (or the media release) publicly. You may need to hold several meetings with key spokespeople before the media conference to make sure all participants understand their exact roles and the order of service. During these meetings, establish no more than three essential take-home messages to impart at the media conference. Coach your spokespeople not to use technical language or jargon. Always make sure their messages are fully accessible to non-specialists.

- *Contacting media representatives by phone.* In general, ringing the people to whom you have sent the media alert is good practice. You can ensure that they have received the information and get a good idea of exactly who will be there. When making these phone calls never be pushy—never insist that journalists attend the media conference—just call to gather information. Keep a list of who is likely to attend and brief your spokespeople on what to expect in terms of numbers of journalists and the outlets they will represent. Wait a few moments before starting the conference if someone you are definitely expecting hasn't arrived yet.
- *Placing corporate or organisation imagery around the room.* You will probably need to at least place a logo on the lectern or the main table, and it is a good idea to place other large images on the walls as suitable background for newspaper photographs or television footage. You will probably confer with a graphic designer or production manager—either a staff member at your organisation or a contractor—to ensure that the imagery fits the occasion. Such imagery should always be big, striking and simple. Don't put up posters showing lots of words and complicated tables; whatever you put up should be instantly understandable.
- *Introducing the speakers.* At the start of the media conference, the PR practitioner may need to call the room to order and make clear and brief introductions of the spokespeople. You do not need to reel off a whole CV, just offer some quick information about who is speaking and ensure that there is no ambiguity about exactly who is who. Learn the principles of public speaking and practise as much as possible, because you need to sound fluent and confident. Dithering or confusing announcements by the PR person will get the event off to a bad start.
- *Lining up one-on-one interviews.* After the main part of the media conference, you may need to race around assisting reporters to set up one-on-one interviews. One of the reasons it is useful to have more than one spokesperson (though not too many) is so you can have more than one interview going at once, and so the television and radio reporters have access to a diversity of talent to make their reports more interesting. Calmly and politely keep your spokespeople moving around to the various reporters and ensure that no one is left wondering what to do next.
- *After the media conference.* Depending upon the nature of your announcement, media interest may continue through the day. Indeed, you may still be answering calls and providing photographs and other requested information well into the evening. A media conference is a special event day and you should be prepared for anything. You may find it sensible not to make any plans for that evening.

When it is over

At the end of a media conference, and after all follow-up issues have been dealt with, you will normally feel exhausted but high. You have done your hard work; now it is time to relax a little and enjoy the

aftermath—assuming that no media liaison disaster becomes apparent. This is where the job satisfaction comes in. PR can be an enormously satisfying job, even if its rewards are rather different from those of a reporter. Observing how the media deal with your announcement after the media conference can be fascinating, particularly if the conference has been properly stage-managed and the chance of the information being misconstrued has been avoided. With any luck, your organisation's senior management will be able to bask in a little glory and, hopefully, they will indicate satisfaction with the job you have done to make it all happen. You will, of course, be carefully monitoring the outcome of your media announcement. Using the services of a **media monitoring organisation** is the most reliable way to ensure comprehensive monitoring. Management may require a report summarising the cost and benefit of the event.

Essential documents 1: the media alert

The media alert, often known as a diary note, serves a specific purpose that is related to but separate from the media release. This document is used to let journalists and editors know about a media conference and to ensure that they have all the information necessary to get them to come along. It is a special media form of invitation.

There are two keys to preparing a successful media alert or diary note:

- 1 Your note must be absolutely clear, with easy-to-follow directions and all relevant information prominently displayed.
- 2 It should not reveal too much because you don't want the story to be released before the media conference and hence compromise its news value.

If you wish, you may place **embargoed** information about the substance of the media conference into the media alert, as metro journalists in particular will not commit to an event unless they know exactly what is being announced. However, as a PR person you must ensure that your announcement is not pre-empted in the media, thus rendering the media conference redundant and probably ensuring that no one turns up. Always remember the purpose of media alert: to get media representatives to come to your event and report on it. They won't do this if the story has already been released, if you make it too difficult for them to get there or if they are confused about dates.

Essential documents 2: the media release

Once your media alert has done its job and enticed reporters to come along to the media conference, you will pass around copies of the full media release, containing all the information you want journalists to have. As mentioned earlier, you may also have distributed the release electronically, either before the media conference (under embargo) or at the time it is scheduled to begin.

Media releases take many formats and styles that are all perfectly acceptable. The exact look of a media release is often a matter of the style and taste preferences of the organisation issuing it. However, there are still some rules that apply in all cases and that are known to assist in the uptake of material from releases.

Media monitoring organisation: A company that may be contracted to track media activity and provide print media clippings and audio and video recordings of media coverage. These companies generally also offer analysis of news trends. Media monitoring organisations are used extensively by PR professionals to measure the impact of publicity activities.

Embargo: A notice bidding the release of public information for a certain time or date; usually associated with a public relations announcement.

While many people still refer to 'press releases', this term is held by many industry practitioners to be outdated as it implicitly excludes the electronic media. While not everyone sees this as an important issue, it is wise for PR people to be as inclusive as possible. This also holds for 'media conference' being preferred to 'press conference'.

The media release is a long-standing method for reaching journalists quickly, mostly because no better way has been found. An effective media release is much like a well-written news story—it should have a clear opening sentence, and then an inverted-pyramid structure that takes the reader through a hierarchy of information from most importance to least. Deal with one fact at a time in each sentence and, like news stories, make each sentence its own paragraph.

In general, your media release should not exceed one page. If you have other information that you must supply, put it into a backgrounder and attach it as an extra document. (Backgrounders are discussed in more detail below.) The release should feature a simple, eye-catching headline in journalistic style. Try not to use clichés or be too clever. A simple, straightforward statement is all that is required; newspaper subs prefer to be clever on their own behalf.

Address the Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and How? formula that also applies to news stories. When you look at what you have written, make sure that all these questions are answered. Your prose should be brief, well expressed and couched in the active voice as much as possible. Your release should never sound like an advertisement—this is media death. In most cases, journalists are repelled by the advertising writing style and will only respond to material that is not only written like news but also contains actual news. In a media release that will be issued in association with a media conference, you must include direct quotes from those spokespeople present at the conference. What they are quoted as saying in the media release should exactly reflect what they are going to say in person at the conference. Your media release must also follow journalistic style in its use of language (see Chapter 14 and Chapter 15 for detailed discussions of grammar and news language, respectively).

Your releases should always look good. Never use hard-to-read typefaces; stick to clear, clean typefaces such as Times New Roman. Similarly, avoid blocks of impenetrable text; there should be plenty of white space and a pleasing, uncrowded appearance. Don't try to fit too much on the page. If it looks too busy, do what you can to simplify it. Use your organisation's logo every time. A consistent look for each alert and release you send out is helpful. If you are doing your job properly, a quick glance by an editor or journalist will assure them that the document they have received is going to be useful.

Clearly list all the means by which journalists can contact you, the PR person, for further information. In the case of a big story announced at a media conference, often the senior people quoted are attending to media queries while other journalists are trying to get through, so you have to help take that overflow. Your role is not the same as the spokespeople's who will provide quotes for the journalists' stories. Instead, you will take journalists' names and phone numbers and get your talent back in touch with them as soon as possible. You may also provide the journalists with background information or clarify anything they are not sure about, so that they understand the story sufficiently to be able to write about it.

Media kits

A **media kit** should contain a useful collection of information that will assist the journalists attending your media conference. The kit will include the main media release as well as a backgrounder and any other relevant material, all contained in a special folder. Kit folders are often A4 cardboard, folded to make a pocket inside to hold material. If your organisation doesn't already have such a folder, you will need to allow plenty of time for one to be designed, approved and printed well ahead of the media conference. Apart from a media release, the kit will often contain background information of various kinds, including fact sheets giving technical information, graphs, photos, pens, coasters or whatever your organisation deems useful for a journalist to have.

Backgrounders

Often, media releases are accompanied by supplementary media material known as a **backgrounder**, which may take several different forms:

- a page or two of brief dot-point notes, perhaps providing key dates and history in the form of a timeline
- essentially, a feature story, written journalistically and provided to flesh out the news story contained in the media release proper.

Your background feature may be up to about 2000 words long and will probably contain subheadings to break it up. You may include relevant images, such as photos, drawings and graphs, as well as a list of further reading and additional contacts. The idea is to give the story more depth and provide the journalist with more options for angles.

TIPS ON WHAT TO DO AND WHAT TO AVOID

Make sure you always:

- ensure that your media conference announces a story that is genuinely newsworthy
- schedule your media conference on a date of optimum news timeliness and at a time of day that accords with media deadlines
- book a suitable venue that will provide a pleasing and relevant backdrop and be just the right size for the event
- brief your spokespeople carefully ahead of time and agree on simple take-home messages and jargon-free delivery
- play a facilitating role and ensure that your spokespeople are efficiently matched with journalists for one-on-one interviews
- ensure that your associated media materials are professional, informative, accurate and newsworthy.

Make sure you never:

- ignore media news values
- set dates and times that accord with priorities other than those of media needs and deadlines

- arrange a huge venue that makes the event look sparse when viewed on the television news that night
- allow your spokespeople to obfuscate or waffle
- give away too much about the story in your media alert or reveal the story ahead of time without applying an embargo to the information
- fail to follow through with further media enquiries after the event.

And to really shine, your media conference should:

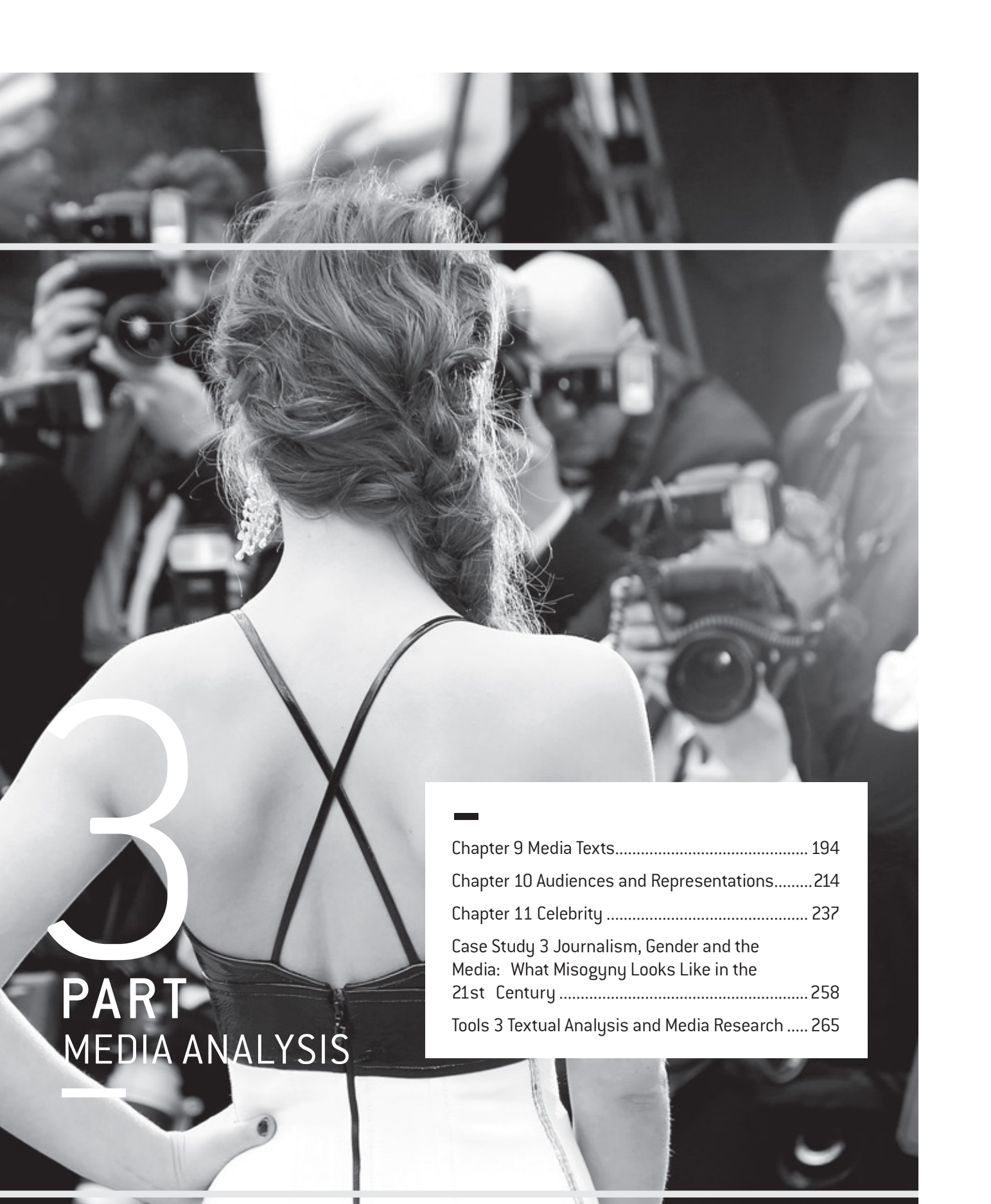
- offer a timely, important story in an efficient manner allowing all media representatives access to well-briefed spokespeople who are able to explain the story clearly and simply. If you get a reputation for being able to do this, journalists will find your media conferences useful and reliable, and they will be more likely to attend them in future.

Conclusion

If you think about what you are trying to achieve as a PR person, the requirements of the media conference become just common sense. You want to supply information to the media sphere in a way that benefits your organisation and accords with media priorities and conventions. If you keep these overall goals in mind, your media conference will be a success.

FURTHER READING

Tymson, C., Lazar, P. & Lazar, R. (2000). *The New Australian and New Zealand Public Relations Manual*. Sydney: Tymson Communications.



3

PART MEDIA ANALYSIS

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Chapter 9 Media Texts.....	194
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Chapter 11 Celebrity	237
Case Study 3 Journalism, Gender and the Media: What Misogyny Looks Like in the 21st Century	258
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Media are products—industrially produced and usually made in great numbers—but they are also unique in the sense that media, regardless of their form, carry meanings. In Part 3 we explore the ways in which we can analyse media.

In Chapter 9 (Media Texts) and Chapter 10 (Audiences and Representations) we look at the elements of media, the commonalities they share, and what it is they ultimately do. We explore the role of the audience and the way media forms are connected to economics and power. In this way, we can start to think of media in terms of textual systems, composed of industries, products and audiences, and recognise that journalism is an important textual system in modern society.

In Chapter 11 (Celebrity) we consider one of the most commonplace yet complex media products—the celebrity—and the ways in which the current proliferation of celebrities is altering the mediasphere.

Case Study 3 (Journalism, Gender and the Media: What Misogyny Looks Like in the 21st Century) looks at sexism and misogyny in journalism and the media today, focusing on sports and gaming journalism.

Tools 3 (Textual Analysis and Media Research) provides an introduction to the basics of media research, and a variety of tools for and practical approaches to analysing and producing image and written media texts.

9

MEDIA TEXTS

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

In media studies and journalism our objects of study are very diverse. The mediasphere is filled with many different forms of media, from films to comics, video clips to television miniseries, podcasts to talkback radio programs, and cooking shows to current affairs exposés. How can we possibly analyse them all? What could a game show about twelve strangers locked together in a house have in common with the nightly news? How can we compare an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Richard III* with *SpongeBob SquarePants*? Is there even a word for all these media forms or some underlying commonality that they might all share—from an American television drama such as *The Walking Dead*, to a photo on an Australian Facebook page, to a Broadway extravaganza such as *Wicked*?

The answer is yes. Simply by being part of the mediasphere, all media forms provide a representation of the world. Furthermore, we can refer to all of these diverse forms—and many more besides—as *texts*.

In this chapter we look at:

- what a text is
- the basics of textual analysis
- where we find texts.

WHAT IS A TEXT?

Traditionally, when people refer to a **text**, they are referring to something they have sent or received on their phone, or a book. Indeed, the very book you're reading now has probably been described as an academic text, a reference text, the set text or the best text ever written on the relationship between media studies and journalism (we can hope, can't we?).

In media studies, texts can refer to a lot more than phone messages or books. **Media texts** also include magazines, newspapers, advertisements, films, television and radio programs, comics, web pages and tweets. Texts can also include graffiti, articles of clothing, works of art, animation cels, pieces of furniture, architecture, sculpture, action figures, plush toys and even people ... basically, anything from which we can make meaning.

#Text: Anything from which we can make meaning.

#Media text: Anything produced and/or distributed by a media industry from which we can make meaning.

Why use the term 'text'?

This broad definition would seem to be unworkable. After all, what can't we make meaning from? But that's precisely why the word is important—it's a very democratic term. There's no value judgment attached. If, for example, you were told that you would be studying Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (a book), an episode of *Revenge* (a television show) and a Barbie doll (a toy), you might be tempted to value the book more than the other two items. However, by referring to them all as texts we can remove any evaluative judgment. Suddenly a Barbie doll is as worthy an object of study as a Tolstoy novel, a piece of graffiti written on the back of a toilet door is as important as one of Shakespeare's folios, and a Lady Gaga song is as valuable as a Robert Frost poem. This is not to say that some texts don't have more impact or influence than other texts, but it does mean that we can analyse all of them without preconceptions.

Every(Lego)thing is awesome



Another important element of texts is their ability to move across media industries, developing new meanings as they go (and subsequently building on their prominence within the larger mediasphere). Think of Lego blocks. Originally designed as a construction toy (encouraging imagination through building), Lego became more about model making (reproducing vehicles and settings) in the 1990s when it picked up a number of media licences including Star Wars, Harry Potter, Spider-Man and more recently Lord of the Rings and Minecraft. Lego has also developed multiplatform media licences of their own (like Fabuland, Galidor and Ninjago) and moved into media production (such as video games, the Clutch Powers DVD movie and humorous Lego versions of franchises like Star Wars and Harry Potter in DVD movies and games). The adult collectability of Lego also increased, partly as a result of the longevity of the line (the Yellow Castle is particularly desirable) and partly due to the increased presence of licensed mini-figures in their sets (Lego Luke Skywalker, Teenage Mutant Turtles and blind-packed characters depicting everyone from Britney Spears' lookalikes to cyborg warriors). This all came together in *The Lego Movie* in 2014, a computer animated film featuring original Lego characters and storylines in connection to several

established Lego subthemes and licences (most prominently, Batman). The film went on to gross US\$468.8 million worldwide, formed the basis of its own shared universe of sequels and tie-ins and spawned over twenty associated Lego sets depicting moments and settings from the film.

As a text, Lego has moved from construction toy to multiplatform media content provider. Its prominence in the mediasphere was confirmed in February 2015 when Lego replaced Ferrari at the top of a *Forbes*' list of the world's most powerful brands (Dill 2015).

However, this type of approach can also lead to all sorts of criticisms.

THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY

A.S. Byatt (2003), writing on the incredible interest in the Harry Potter novels, films and merchandise, claimed:

It is the substitution of celebrity for heroism that has fed this phenomenon. And it is the levelling effect of cultural studies, which are as interested in hype and popularity as they are in literary merit.

This levelling effect is another way of describing the democratic effect of using the term 'text'. It is a levelling effect because it creates a level playing field, erasing distinctions between high culture and popular culture, mainstream and alternative, and local and international.

Remember that the discipline of media studies, like cultural studies, is not saying that literary merit is not important. It is not suggesting that Shakespeare, Dickens and Orwell are not worthy of study—indeed, all of these authors are mentioned in this very book. It is certainly not saying that media studies should replace literary studies, any more than it should replace political science or law. The real point is that media studies, like cultural studies, is not just interested in literary merit. Media studies is also interested in concepts such as celebrity, **hype** and popularity, and in why some things become a phenomenon (to use some of the words that Byatt uses in her criticism of academic approaches to the Harry Potter novels and films). We do this because what are often regarded as the most trivial aspects of our culture (the popular) are also sites of profound importance in terms of power, economics and understanding—as we shall see.

That's why we study media, and why we use the term 'text' to describe what we study.

TEXTING

The idea of the text is crucially important to mobile phone communication. Millions of these brief, simultaneously written and visual texts, composed of letters, words, numbers and emoticons, are produced and distributed every day. Mobile phone texting is a modern form of shorthand that evolved from the limitations of the phone keyboard and the limitations of early SMS (short messaging service) facilities, which only permitted the use of 160 characters. But even with developments in phone technology, and the increased use of predictive text, texting (also known as SMS language, txt or txt talk) continues to be used. Indeed, texting conventions are so commonplace that they are often referred to in other media, as in the title of Fall Out Boy's 2007 song 'Thnks fr th Mmrs' ('Thanks for the Memories') or the more colloquial use of 'LOL' (laughing out loud) in conversation.

Literary merit: The intrinsic value or worth of a literary work based on the quality of writing, inventiveness of story or ability to capture a certain period of time or emotion; often used to demarcate literature from other formulaic or genre fiction, and from the wider body of popular culture.

#Hype: Extravagant and overstated publicity; a contraction of the word 'hyperbole', which means an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.

HOW DO WE MAKE MEANING?

Having defined what a text is and why we use the term, let's now consider how we make meaning from a text.

In Tools 3, we outline a number of ways of analysing specific texts in greater detail. Following Alan McKee, we call all of these methods of analysis 'sense-making practices'. Here, however, we just want to think about what happens when we first encounter a text; generally, we start off by **reading a text**.

Reading occurs when people first interact with a text. Therefore, in media studies we can say that we read film and television. This may sound strange to you, but it's something that you do all the time, every day, when you consume media. A few examples appear in the following boxes.

#Reading a text: The first act in interpreting the text; the point at which we start to make meaning.

READING MEDIA

When you sit down at the end of the day, turn on the television and start to channel surf, you're reading texts very quickly. If you pause on a program with a laugh track, you will probably read that text as a comedy program. If horses and big hats are involved, you will probably read the program as a western. If it is in black and white, then you might read that it is a relatively old text. Something similar occurs when you are searching for information on the internet. You will Google a search term or phrase and then scroll quickly through the results that come up, reading through the information to see if it is relevant to your search.

In both cases you are reading the text; that is, you are interpreting and making meaning from the text. It may not always be the most likely reading, but you are engaging and interacting with the text in some way.

READING SOMETHING NEW

When you go to a new city or country, or are exposed to a foreign culture, you will be acutely aware of reading texts as you try to make meaning from things that are otherwise strange. If you are looking for a toilet, you will be reading texts for male or female signs. If you are looking for an airport, you will be reading texts for symbols that could represent an airport—like the symbol for a plane, or the letter 'A'.

You don't really need to go somewhere new to do this. You could simply try reading a foreign film without subtitles. How much meaning can you make through the images—the clothing, the looks people give one another and the locations? Can you tell where the film is set? What it is about? In each case, interpreting the film will be informed by the ways you read the text.

READING ADVERTISING

Some texts are so simple that reading a text is all you have to do to understand it. Advertisements are often remarkably simple texts because they want to sell a product. The classic advertising axiom 'Sex sells' is a great example of this: an attractive girl standing beside a sports car or a great-looking guy with a girl are both examples of texts we can read so easily that they have become clichés: 'If I buy this product, then I will be as sexy as this person, or can attract someone as sexy as that person.'



Some advertisements do work via obscurity, encouraging you to stay with them or return to them to work them out like a puzzle. However, ads are most often designed to be read as quickly and simply as possible, to encourage you to buy a product.

ANALYSING A TEXT

Reading a text is such an automatic response that we are often unaware that we're even doing it. It takes something foreign or strange (as mentioned above) to make us recognise that we are involved in the process. Additionally, when we're confronted with a very difficult text, we may struggle to make meaning from it. Again, simply reading a text is not always a very accurate way of making meaning.

What we need to do is educate our guess. The first thing we should do is slow down the process of reading, to make us aware of each step that we are taking in interpreting the text. Then we need to inform our reading by looking at things outside the text, such as other texts or the place where the text is located. In this way we're moving from simply reading a text towards **analysing** a text. Each step we take educates our guess. Some textbooks also use the term 'close reading' to describe this process.

A complete textual analysis is usually a combination of three approaches:

- breaking down a text into its various components
- framing a text (becoming aware of how the text is presented to us and where we find the text)
- looking at the relationship between texts.

You might think that this seems an exhaustively long process. Furthermore, you might notice that to describe these approaches we use a number of terms that will be new to you, but in the immortal words of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*: DON'T PANIC!

While the terms may be unfamiliar to you, the practices they describe will not be. This is because you are already reading texts, so you're already analysing texts, too. The process seems exhaustive only because all we are trying to do is slow down the process of making meaning, and one of the best ways to do this is to name each part of the process, one by one. Just remember:

- You do all of these things so quickly they are practically unconscious processes.
- By breaking them down and naming each step we make them conscious processes, so you become aware of the decisions you make and, ultimately, how meaning is made.
- Best of all, once you have learnt the concepts in the chapter, you will find that you can apply them to any and every text you encounter—from a simple radio jingle through to an exotic foreign film.

A FORENSIC EXAMINATION

John Hartley (1999) describes this kind of analysis as being akin to a 'forensic examination'. As with the television series *CSI*, *Bones* or *Silent Witness*, or the Kay Scarpetta novels of Patricia Cornwell, we are confronted with a mystery: how do we make meaning? In place of a body on the slab, we have a text, and like those forensic examiners we need to consider each piece of the text, the text's relationship with other texts and where the text was found in order to solve the mystery.

analysis: Examination of detail of the elements of something in order to determine how the whole functions.

WHAT IS TEXTUAL ANALYSIS?

Because there are many different types of texts, there are also lots of different ways of analysing texts. We look at a number of these in Tools 3. But for our purposes now, we will use McKee's definition (2003: 1): 'When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text.'

Note that this is an educated guess. Also, 'educated' here means informed by theory and research, reading around the text and finding plenty of evidence to support your guess. By educating your guess, you can move from simply reading the text towards making the most likely interpretation of the text.

Origin of textual analysis

This idea of **textual analysis** emerges from work done by theorists known as the French structuralists in the 1960s, and more particularly from the work of Roland Barthes (1915–80). Barthes was a literary theorist who believed that any kind of popular cultural product could be 'decoded' by reading the 'signs' within the text (Barthes 1957). In his highly influential book *Mythologies* (1957), Barthes applied semiotics to a number of media forms including wrestling, an advertisement for pasta and even the face of actress Greta Garbo. The version of textual analysis in our book is a blend of the approaches put forward by Barthes, Saussure, Hartley, McKee, Thwaites, Davis and Mules.

#Textual analysis:
An educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of the text.

Gogglebox

The observational documentary series *Gogglebox* provides a great example of textual analysis in action. Commencing in the UK in 2013, the series watches recurring couples as they watch the previous week's television series. In other words, it watches couples, families and friends as they perform textual analysis on a variety of media texts. The Channel Four format has proven to be so successful that it has been adapted for viewers in Australia, the USA, Ireland, Ukraine and China.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND HOW WE MAKE MEANING?

You may be wondering why it is important to understand how we make meaning. After all, if it is something we all naturally do, then why are we trying to understand it in such detail?

The main reason is that certain media industries claim to be able to affect people's thoughts and behaviours. They claim to know how people will make meaning from certain texts and, in some cases, how they can direct people to make a certain meaning. These industries include:

- *advertising, marketing and public relations*, who want audiences to accept their messages as being right and correct
- *filmmakers and other popular media practitioners*, who similarly construct texts in such a way that they will produce certain meanings or elicit certain emotional responses; think of how Steven

Spielberg creates sympathy and sadness for the plight of the lost E.T. in the film of the same name

- *activists and speechwriters*, who also aim to incite or inflame the emotions of the audiences to win their support or allay their fears
- *news organisations, documentary filmmakers and journalists*, because the selection of items during a report or broadcast can alter people's perceptions (see Chapter 12). The story may be edited or put together in such a way as to elicit a certain emotional response. Look, for example, at the way in which documentary filmmaker Michael Moore uses music and editing in his documentaries (such as *Fahrenheit 9/11* or *Bowling for Columbine*) to mobilise an audience around an issue.

Ultimately, what all of these industries and individuals have in common is the claim that they can predict, with some certainty, how their texts will affect people. But the best they really can do is perform their own textual analysis; that is, make their own educated guess about likely interpretations of, and responses to, the texts they produce.

If you want to become one of these individuals or work in one of these industries, it is important that you can make an educated guess as well. Similarly, understanding how we make meaning will empower you as a consumer of media, enabling you to negotiate, resist and enjoy media texts in more detail. It will actually enable you to appreciate how media function in relation to communication, economics and power, which will enable you to be a more successful media producer as well.

BREAKING DOWN THE TEXT

Sign: A unit of meaning; a structural element of a text that produces meaning[s].

Every text is a combination of signs. **Signs** are those elements of a text that enable us to read a text in a certain way. For example, the clothes you wear all act as signs. This is because while clothes have a function (in that they protect your body) they also produce a meaning (wearing a suit suggests formality, wearing a bikini suggests going to the beach, and wearing a football jumper suggests you support a certain sporting team or code).

If we are analysing a film, for example, we could look at the location, costumes, actors and colours that are used as signs. If we are analysing a magazine article, we could look at the typeface, the words and the accompanying pictures as signs.

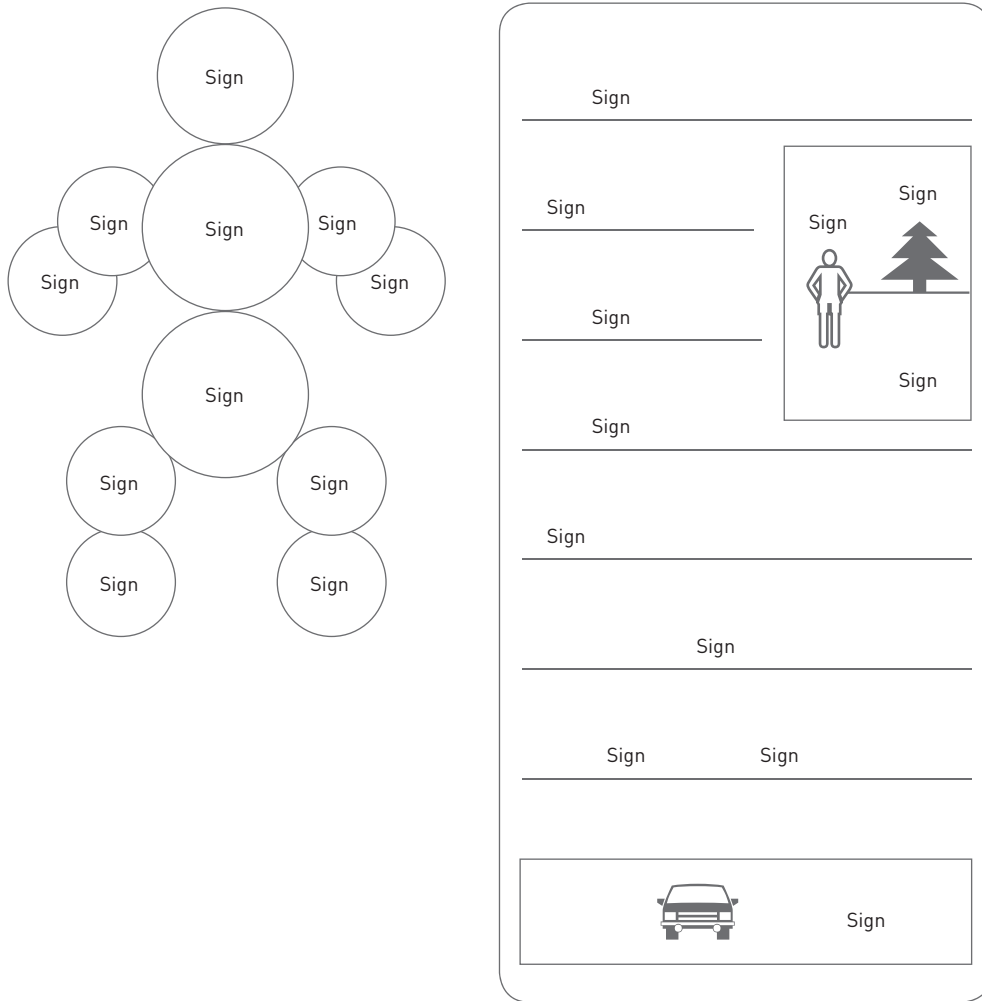


A PROBLEM OF FOCUS

Some of you will have already noticed that texts and signs overlap. We could study a costume or a picture as a text in itself (and then break it down into its own combination of signs) or we could consider it as a sign in a larger text, such as a film or magazine article (see Figure 9.1). It really does depend on what text we are analysing at the time. If we are interested in the film as a whole, then the costume will become a sign in the larger text. If we are interested in the costume itself, then the costume will become the text made up of a number of signs (the articles of clothing). What is a text and what is a sign is determined by the **object of study**. What we are focusing on will inform whether we treat something as a sign or as a text. Remember: your aim is always to understand how meaning is made. Your analysis should be undertaken to achieve this aim.

#Object of study: What you are studying; the focus of your research.

FIGURE 9.1 Signs are the structural elements of the text



UNDERSTANDING SIGNS

The idea of signs comes from Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1986) and his notion of **semiotics**: 'a science that studies the life of signs'. Signs are the structural elements of texts. If we think of a text as a body, signs are the molecules that make up that body. Signs are not abstract ideas: they are things in the world, things we can see. This is also why we call them signs, because, like street signs, they often represent something (be it an airport or the concept of stopping) with something else (a physical object, a colour or a shape).

#Semiotics: Sometimes also referred to as semiology or semiotic studies; the study of the role of signification in communication, including, but not limited to, how meaning is made (both how it is produced and how it is understood by an audience member).

This means signs produce meaning rather than simply convey meaning. As film theorist Robert Stam describes it, language is not ‘a mere adjunct to our grasp of reality but rather formative of it’ (Stam & Raengo 2001: 104).

More importantly, signs produce many meanings, rather than just one meaning per sign. This is why we can never say a text has only one meaning—it can have a ‘more likely’ meaning, but, ultimately, because each sign that makes up the text is capable of many meanings, the text as a whole can never have one, unitary meaning. Think of the ‘hipster or hobo’ memes online. The humour of these memes derives from the fact that the signs for hipster and hobo (scruffy clothing, scruffy hair and scruffy beards) are relatively interchangeable. Without knowing or talking to the person, it can be hard to ‘know’ whether they are a hipster or a hobo just from these signs. (Unless they have a man bun. Very few hobos have man buns.)

Because a sign produces meaning, it necessarily requires an audience—someone to make sense of that meaning. This means that signs are social, and in being social they make the texts social, too. They resemble a needy person who just wants to be the centre of attention all the time, waving his or her hands about saying, ‘Look at me, look at me’. How signs—and texts— attract attention is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 10.

READING SOCIALLY

Whenever you are out socially, you will analyse people as texts.

If, for example, you are out at a club and see someone you ‘like’, you will break the text (the person) down into a number of signs. You might look at the articles of clothing that the person is wearing, whether they have any jewellery or tattoos and what they are drinking. You will certainly be looking at their physical attributes (we’ll let you think of an example for this) and how they interact with surrounding people (whether they are alone or part of a group, their closeness to or distance from other people, whether they seem to be enjoying themselves and whether they appear to be single or attached).

You are trying to make meaning from what you see; that is, you are reading socially to decide: Am I attracted to this person? What attracts me to them? Am I going to ask this person out? Is this person already with someone?

Once again, you are interpreting this text. This time, however, you are not simply reading the text, but also engaging in a textual analysis—breaking the text down into its component signs because you want to make the most likely interpretation to save yourself from the embarrassment of rejection.

SIGNIFICATION

Having broken the text down into signs we can now break down each sign into two parts—the signified and the signifier:

The signifier is the physical part of the sign. The signified is the mental part of the sign: the abstract concept represented by the signifier. We call the relationship between the signifier and the signified the process of signification. These two elements are part of every sign. You can never have a signifier without a signified, or a signified without a signifier. You can move each part around (see below), but both parts must always be present to produce meaning.

Signification: The elements of semiotics: the signifier is the physical part of the sign; the signified is the mental part of the sign—the abstract concept represented by the sign; and signification is the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

FIGURE 9.2 A sign



Once again, this is why we call these elements of a text signs, because they work just like street signs.

- Think of a STOP sign.
- The signifier is the physical aspect of the sign itself: the symbol, the shape, the colour, the pole sticking into the ground and the word 'STOP'.
- The signified is stopping: slowing down to a complete stop.
- In this way, the stop sign signifies the concept of stopping.

Note that the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary; that is, there is no natural link between the signifier and the signified. There is nothing about a stop sign that has any natural link to the concept of stopping. It has simply been agreed, by custom and usage, that this colour, shape and word signifies the concept of stopping. Similarly, the link is arbitrary between most English words and the concepts they represent. The classic example here is 'cat'. There is nothing in the word 'cat' (the signifier) to suggest a furry, four-legged animal who occasionally allows humans to pat it. Indeed, Thwaites, Davis and Mules (2002) note that this signifier can also refer to a piece of earthmoving equipment (bearing the Cat brand), a medical procedure (a cat scan) or, in education, can be the abbreviation of a Common Assessment Task (CAT), a written assignment.

In other written languages, such as Chinese ideograms, Egyptian hieroglyphics or Japanese kanji, there is more of a link between the words (the signifiers) and the concepts (the signifieds), because the words themselves evolved out of symbolic visual representations of certain things in the real world (see Figure 9.3).

FIGURE 9.3 Japanese kanji for tree (ki)

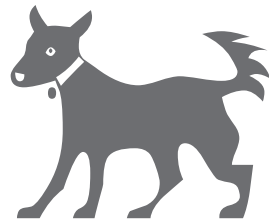


But even visual signifiers share an arbitrary relationship with the signified. For example, both of the images in Figure 9.4 are signifiers of 'dog', even though they are widely disparate.

This means a number of signs can become signifiers for signifieds that seem completely unrelated; for example:

- *celebrities*: these are people who are often referred to as being emblematic of their times (celebrity is discussed in detail in Chapter 11). Marilyn Monroe, for example, is frequently

FIGURE 9.4 Dog



Drawing of a dog



Photo of a dog

referred to as being representative of the 1950s; that is, Marilyn Monroe functions as a sign—the person (the signifier) signifies the 1950s (the signified)

- *iconic news images*: these also function as signs—the image (the signifier) signifies the issue, story or event (the signified).

The X-Files and *Fringe*

Depending on your object of study, entire media texts can function as signs. The television series *The X-Files*, for example, which revolves around the efforts of two FBI agents to uncover a vast government conspiracy, was seen as being representative of the paranoia of the 1990s. As such, in a study of the 1990s, *The X-Files* could function as a sign; that is, the television series (the signifier) signifies the paranoia of the 1990s (the signified). By contrast, the television series *Fringe*, which revolves around the efforts of a special FBI Fringe Division team to stop an invasion from a parallel universe, can be read as being representative of the paranoia of the 2000s. Whereas *The X-Files*'s shadowy government conspiracy signifies that particular paranoia of the 1990s, the doppelgangers of *Fringe*'s parallel universe signify the particular paranoia based on terrorism and the fear of sleeper cells: people who look like us but are actually plotting against us. This paranoia has had particular cultural resonance since the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the USA. In this way *Fringe* also functions as a sign: a television series (the signifier) signifies the paranoia of the thousands (the signified).

We see these ideas come together in the figure of the newsreader or news presenter. Media organisations invest great sums of money in their on-air news presenters in the hopes of branding certain news stories and media events as their property. If audiences begin associating exclusive stories and breaking news with a certain presenter on a certain network, then the network itself becomes a signifier of breaking news and exclusivity (the signified). This can translate to greater audience share, greater advertising revenue and the perception that this is the network to watch for news.

Signification, therefore, is the process by which meaning is produced. Breaking texts down into their component signs—and then understanding the relationship between the signifier and

signified(s) that make up each of these signs—brings us one step closer to understanding how meanings are produced and, ultimately, how we make meaning.

Connotation and denotation

But there is still a problem here. Think of our Marilyn Monroe example. Monroe doesn't just represent the 1950s. She can also represent femininity, or glamour, or stardom, or tragedy. Similarly the word 'cat' can represent an animal, a piece of earthmoving equipment, an assessment task or a medical procedure. In each instance, the signifier remains the same, but attaches to a variety of different signifieds. Each of these signifieds appears equally valid—so how do we determine which meaning is produced?

WHY YOU WILL NEVER LOOK AT A BOUQUET THE SAME WAY AGAIN

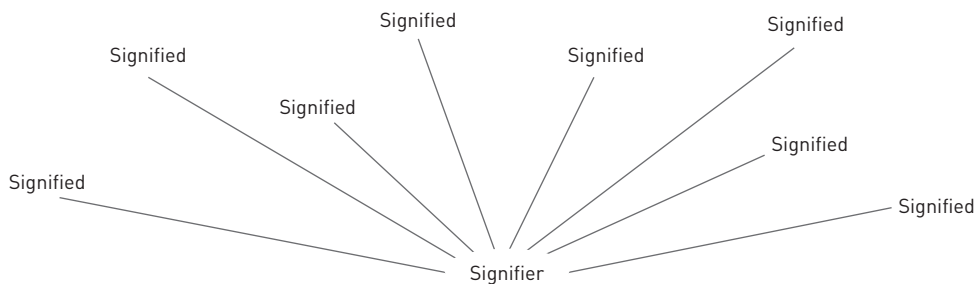
Think of a young man giving a young woman a bunch of flowers.

- These flowers are the signifiers; that is, they are the physical part of the sign.
- The most obvious signified is love: the man is giving the woman these flowers because he loves her.
- But the signified could also be guilt—because the man just cheated on the woman with someone he met in a bar.
- Or the signified could be grief—because the woman's mother just passed away.

The signifier (the flowers) remains the same. But the signified changes, and each signified is equally valid.

It may be more appropriate to think of a sign in graphic way, as illustrated in Figure 9.5.

FIGURE 9.5 Signifier and signified



To understand which one is the most likely connotation (the denotation) for a sign in any given text, we need to consider two further things:

- the context in which the text is found
- the relationship between the text we are studying and other texts.

Think about how this might affect the larger text. As the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, this means that media texts are naturally **polysemic**; that is, 'open to many interpretations'. This is why we can only ever say there is a more likely interpretation; there can

#Polysemy: The openness of texts to many different interpretations; a splintering of interpretations.

Connotations: The possible signifieds that attach to a signifier.

Denotation: The most likely connotation of a signifier, often determined as a matter of common sense or by looking at the relationship of the text to other texts or the context in which the text is found.

never be a definitive right or wrong answer—that a text means this or that—because texts lend themselves to being read in lots of different ways. As the relationship between the signifier and signified is an arbitrary or unclear one, there is nothing in the nature of the sign itself to tie a signifier to just one signified.

Rather than the pattern shown in Figure 9.3, we can think of the one signifier having a spread of possible signifieds, as in Figure 9.5. We call this spread of possible signifieds **connotations**.

And the most stable or verifiable or likely connotation we call the **denotation**. As Stuart Hall describes it: ‘Denotation is the simple, basic, descriptive level, where consensus is wide and most people would agree on the meaning’ (1997: 38–9).

DENOTATION: FIRST OR SECOND ORDER SIGNIFICATION?

In this definition of denotation we are moving slightly away from Roland Barthes’s use of the term. For Barthes, denotation was the first level of signification: what an audience could literally see. So a denotation of a flower would be a red rose with a green stem. A denotation of an emoticon would be a representation of a smiling yellow face. It was only at the second level of signification—connotation—that meaning is made. The red rose has connotations of passion and love, for example, or the smiling yellow face has connotations of happiness, fun and laughter. As media scholar John Fiske describes it: ‘denotation is what is photographed, connotation is how it is photographed’ (1982: 91).

Following other scholars in the field, (Valentin Voloshinov, David Mick and Laura Politi, even Louis Althusser) what we have done here is collapse these levels together. Denotation becomes the most likely connotation—the most likely meaning—because it is at the level of ‘most likely’, ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’ that most media producers work. We believe this is also in keeping with Barthes’s changing view of denotation. By the 1970s, Barthes had concluded that ‘denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so; under this illusion, it is ultimately no more than the last of the connotations (the one which seems both to establish and close the reading), the superior myth by which the text pretends to return to the nature of language, to language as nature’ (1974: 9). Thus for Barthes, denotation becomes another connotation—the ‘most likely’, ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’ connotation.

As we shall see below, what appears to be ‘most likely’, ‘natural’ or ‘common sense’ is always laden with other meanings, so it is important to be able to define what is happening here—and ‘denotation’ seems a good term to use. Just be aware of how the term can be used differently if you are reading around the area.

In and Out

Frank Oz’s 1997 film *In and Out* provides an example of how connotations work. In the film, an actor publicly thanks his drama teacher when he wins an Academy Award—and publicly outs him as gay at the same time. The teacher denies this, but is surprised to discover that most of his students—and the town—think he is gay because of certain things he does: waving his hands around as he speaks, being neat, being well spoken and liking to read.

'Gay' is the signified. Usually, the signifier of gay would be a same-sex relationship, but in this film, all of these other activities become signifiers of being gay; that is, each of these signifiers carries the connotation of being gay. This is only one of the signifieds that using your hands when you speak could carry—but in the film it becomes the denotation, or the most likely connotation. Indeed, the connotations become so convincing that by the end of the film the teacher himself is even questioning his own sexuality, despite being engaged and never having been previously attracted to a man.

'Dog'

For a more general example, think of the word 'dog'. One of the signifieds of dog is a furry, four-legged animal that barks and likes to be patted by humans. But dog can also be used as a derogatory term for a woman, or a way of praising the sexual activity of a man ('You dirty dog'). As unfortunate as it is to admit it, if a woman carrying a dog walked through that door behind you right now, and someone said 'Look at that dog', it might be unclear which signified was being referred to, as these are both currently used connotations of the word 'dog'.

This can make it very difficult for those industries and individuals we described earlier—such as directors, public relations firms and journalists—to produce the meanings that they want to. What they have to do is reduce the polysemy of the text, or to limit the range of connotations. We call this process encoding a text, and it is described in detail in Tools 3.

FRAMING THE TEXT

In determining the denotation (the most likely signified) we make one other, very fast decision—we consider how the text has been framed; that is, how the text is presented to us. This involves two elements: the frame (the limits of the text itself) and the **context** (where the text is located).

#Context: The location of the text; the point in time and space where an audience will locate it.

Frames

All texts have frames. Sometimes we are very aware of them, such as the individual frames of a film, the screen on which a television show is displayed, the edges of a photograph or the panels of a comic book. But every text has a frame, even when we may be unaware of it. This is because all texts are bounded in some way: think of the limitations of a telephone text message (limited by the dexterity of the user and the amount of space on a phone), a newspaper report (limited by column inches) or a radio program (limited to a certain bandwidth at a certain time). Even website displays are somewhat limited by the size of the screen on which they are displayed (though hyperlinks can overcome these limitations to some extent).

Frames are important because an awareness of what is inside the frame also makes us aware of what has been left out. This directly relates to ideas of power, access and control, all of which we

will be looking at in more detail in Chapters 10 and 12. As Entman (1993: 52) points out: 'To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient.' Framing, therefore, is the selection of elements that make up the text.

Framing is a particularly crucial term in understanding how journalists work, for at each stage in the production of a news story we can see frames being used:

- The event or issue is first framed as news by editors, producers and journalists; that is, it is considered worthy of being reported.
- These gatekeepers set the frames of reference by which audiences interpret the news.
- The story is then framed as a media text for publishing or broadcast.
- The story itself then serves as a frame, to set the agenda (or frame the agenda) for further discussion of the issue or event.

As Gitlin (1980: 7) puts it, framing becomes a way to 'organise the world both for journalists who report it and, in some important degree, for us who rely on their reports'. We look at the processes involved in framing news texts in Chapter 12.

Contexts

All texts also have a location; that is, a point in time and space where we encounter them. This is important, for as Nick Lacey notes: '[t]he fact that [our] understanding is learnt means that the particular society we are born into has a great effect upon us. People born into different societies have a different understanding of the world, because they learn about it in different ways' (Lacey 1998: 6–7). Barthes refers to this as the second level of signification, more 'general, global and diffuse' (1967: 91–2) as signification is informed by the wider historical, social or cultural context of which a reader may otherwise be unaware.

Remember, no text exists in isolation. In reading texts we are always aware of the texts' dialogic relationship with other texts (which we call intertextuality, something we return to in Chapter 10), and we are always aware of the context, the point at which we encounter them.

There are nine basic contexts—structural, physical, temporal, political, textual, narrative, generic, industrial and sociocultural—which all overlap to some degree, and a de facto tenth context, the mediasphere (see Figure 1.1). Simply by virtue of being media texts, all media texts are contextualised into the larger mediasphere; that is, they are all part of that web of dialogic relationships outlined in Chapter 1.

Assisting us in finding a context for a text is a series of codes embedded in the text. **Codes** are usually parts of the signs that make up texts. These codes could include such elements as colour, dress, lighting, angles, words used and format on the page or screen.

Codes will differ between media texts. Indeed, on the most basic level, they will often indicate what form of media we will be dealing with:

- An aural text with a lack of visuals, for example, would suggest a radio text.
- A visual text broken up by advertising would suggest a televisual (rather than filmic) text.

Codes may also help us to determine in which of the nine contexts a text can be found. Some of these contexts will already be familiar to you from previous chapters; others we will return to later in the book. Each in its own way can assist us to understand how meaning is made, because each

Code: Part of the signs that make up texts, including such elements as colour, dress, lighting, angles, words used and format on the page or screen.

gives us an idea of where the text comes from and what its place is in the wider world. It is another important step in educating our guess as to the most likely meaning of this text.

The structural context: the form or shape of the text

- Is it written, oral, aural or visual—or a combination of them?
- What is the shape of the text? A certain type of arrangement of words on a page, for example, can suggest a letter; the use of the inverted pyramid style of writing can suggest a news article. By contrast, an interplay of words and visuals might suggest a comic.
- How does the shape of the text alter the way you make meaning? Do you, for example, privilege a text more if it is written than visual?

The physical context: the physical location where we encounter and/or engage with the text

- Think of the difference between seeing a film in a cinema and seeing it on television. There are the obvious differences in being out of your house (as opposed to watching something in your home) and the size of the screen—but the differences also have an impact on the way the film might be cut (if it's being aired by a free-to-air television network it could be cut for censorship or advertising requirements) or how you consume the film. Are you doing something else while it is on? Are the lights on or off?
- What difference do censorship or classification make?
- What difference does it make to read a newspaper at a cafe rather than at a library?
- What expectation might you have of a magazine labelled as, say, a men's magazine?
- How does where you encounter the text alter how you make meaning from it?

The temporal context: the time when the text was produced or first encountered

- Think of when the text was created. This may account for certain ideas on racial, political or sexual equality that may seem strange to you, or the use of technologies or fashions that may seem outdated.
- It may also account for technical deficiencies, such as the quality of the film stock, or the absence of colour or sound.
- Was the text particularly revolutionary for its time? Did it challenge the prevailing ideas of its time? Or is it a relatively conservative text? Does it look back to a particular idea of the past? Or is it the forerunner for current texts?
- The temporal context can also refer to when audiences encounter the text—either the time it appears on a schedule (as in a morning radio show, a daytime soap or the late news) or the age of the audience member when they encounter it (the popularity of *Starsky and Hutch* in the 1970s, and *Pokemon* in the 1990s).
- Think about how the time of the text's production and whether the time of its reception could have an impact on the way meaning is made. Does it make you reconsider how ambitious or how tame the text actually was?

The political context: the political regime under which the text was created or to which it responds

- How has the text been informed by the politics of its time? Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, for example, uses the Salem witch trials as a metaphor for the ideas of McCarthyism that were prevalent in the USA when the play was published (in the late 1940s). Similarly, Alan Moore and Guy Davis's *V for Vendetta* comic book uses a story about a futuristic British government to provide a critique of the political climate of the 1980s UK.
- How does the text relate to the politics of the present? Has it taken on a new meaning, a new resonance or a new relevance? Or does it come across as conservative now, whereas once it might have been seen as radical?
- How does this relationship to politics alter how meaning is made? Does it depend on how explicit or implicit the relationship is?

The textual context: where the text sits in relation to other texts

Think about how this text's relationship to other texts may affect how meaning is made, for example, does it require a greater level of cultural competency from the audience than some other texts?

The narrative context: where the text fits into a larger story or narrative

- How does a text advance a story or narrative? Is it part of a larger narrative? Is it initiating a narrative or does it come at the end of a narrative?
- How does recognising how a text fits into a larger narrative alter how meaning is made?

The generic context: what genre the text might belong to

- How might we classify the text in terms of genre?
- What elements of a text assist us in determining the genre it belongs to?
- How does belonging to one genre rather than another affect how meaning is made? For example, do you privilege something in the news genre more than something in the science fiction genre? How closely is the notion of genre related to notions of exclusion and inclusion, and power and control?

The industrial context: the media industry that has produced this text

- How can we work out which media industry has produced this text? This will involve questions of structural context, the shape of the text and the physical context.
- How have the work practices of the industry shaped the text, especially in film and television? How might this affect how meaning is made?

The sociocultural context: the position of the text in the wider culture and society

- This encompasses all of the above contexts, as well as considerations of the ethical and legal frameworks within which the text was constructed, and the overall impact and influence of the text in the wider culture and society.

- How can we understand the ethical and legal frameworks in which media texts are produced?
- How can we measure the impact or influence of a text? How might both of these considerations alter how meaning is made?

These questions are all addressed in other chapters. The relationship between texts is discussed in Chapter 10, as are the ideas of exclusion and inclusion, power and control, and impact and influence. Genre was discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. For more detail on ethical–legal frameworks and the wider social context, see Part 5.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEXTS

Thinking about the relationship between texts is a crucial element of textual analysis and media texts in general; it is developed in more detail in Chapter 10.

As we have already seen in Chapter 1, media texts rarely work in isolation. Texts are interdependent; that is, they often make meaning through their relationship with other texts. They establish conventions (ways of reading texts, such as the shot–reverse shot mentioned in Chapter 1) and, sometimes, they explicitly reference another text for purposes of parody, pastiche or homage. The presence of just one actor can signify a whole body of work; it is easier to accept Harrison Ford in the role of a hero because you have already seen him as a hero in most of his other films (as Han Solo, Indiana Jones or Jack Ryan, for example). Other conventions are so commonplace that they become generic; that is, indicative of the film belonging to a certain genre. So suspenseful music on the soundtrack might indicate that a character is facing great danger while all of the characters spontaneously breaking into song might indicate that this program belongs to the musical genre.

This idea of texts not existing in isolation, but rather depending on each other to make meaning, is called **intertextuality** (coined by the poststructuralist theorist Julia Kristeva in 1966). This really flows back to that earlier idea (again in Chapter 1) of **cultural competency**. You can still enjoy *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, *Austin Powers* or *Mad* magazine without knowing all of the intertexts they are referring to and/or quoting from. But you will find it easier to make meaning, whether it is understanding a reference or getting a joke, if you are aware of the intertexts.

Intertexts inform us, enlighten us and help us make sense of texts. They include everything from previous episodes of a television series (imagine trying to make sense of 24 or *Breaking Bad* without having seen any of the early episodes), to guidebooks and webpages on particular media products, to other films by the same director.

Intertextuality also assists us in two ways to understand how meaning is made:

- It provides a textual context for the text; a way of placing the text in relation to other texts.
- It provides a way of understanding how the text works in relation to these other texts.

Intertextuality, therefore, becomes not only a way of connecting texts, but also a way of determining the significance of an individual text. (This is covered in more detail in the next chapter.)

#Intertextuality: The idea that texts do not exist in isolation, but rather are interdependent. Texts frequently make meaning through their relationship with other texts, through citation, adaptation, satire, allusion and plagiarism. These other texts (secondary texts) are called intertexts.

#Cultural competency: Knowledge and ideas that are gained from experience; cultural knowledge is 'insider' knowledge that is known only by people within a particular culture or by people who have learnt about the culture through interaction with it.

Once again, intertextuality can also act as a way of including or excluding the audience. Those who are aware of the intertexts are included, and those who are not are excluded. Think about how a knowledge of intertexts assists you in understanding how meaning is made. What conventions is this text drawing on? What references to other texts does it make? What are the differences in making meaning when the text is read with intertextual knowledge compared with it being read without intertextual knowledge?

In the next chapter we look at texts from the perspective of the audiences to explore the ways in which audiences engage with texts and conclude with a consideration of what it is that texts actually do.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Media texts offer a number of ways of representing the world.
- We can break down texts into units of meaning (signs), and can further break down signs into a physical element (the signifier) and a range of mental concepts (the spread of signifieds).
- These spreads of signifieds are called connotations.
- The most stable, verifiable and likely connotation is the denotation, usually determined by reference to the situation (the context) in which the text is found.
- Audiences are so media savvy, and make meaning from media texts so quickly, that it is almost an unconscious process.
- We refer to this process as reading a text.
- It is only through the process of analysing a text that we can slow down this process, which is what makes us aware of how meaning is made.
- Textual analysis is a three-stage process of breaking down the text, framing the text (considering how the text is presented and the context in which the text is located) and looking at the relationship between texts.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a text?
- 2 Explain the relationship between signification and connotation.
- 3 How might denotation be 'manipulated'?
- 4 What is context?
- 5 Apply the three-stage process of textual analysis to some of the media texts you currently engage with (and maybe one or two you don't). What new insight did textual analysis provide into the text—and into yourself as an audience member?

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10

AUDIENCES AND REPRESENTATIONS

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

You have probably heard that famous philosophical question: 'If a tree falls in a forest and nobody hears it, did it really fall at all?' In a similar vein, we could ask if a text can truly function as a text without an audience to read it.

In Chapter 9 we explained what a text was, broke it down into its component signs and considered some of the contexts in which texts are situated and the relationship between texts. But this is really only half of the story. A text presupposes an audience: texts cannot produce meaning without having someone to make meaning from them. To appreciate how a text can actually function as a representation of the world, we need to think about the people who are making meaning: the audience and how their relationships with texts are constantly changing, thanks to advancements in technology.

In this chapter we look at:

- the relationship between audiences and texts
- ways of thinking about audiences
- what it is that texts actually do.

THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF SIGNS

In the previous chapter we saw that texts are made up of units of meaning called *signs*, and that each sign is composed of a *signifier* and a possible spread of *signifieds* called *connotations*. The most likely signified is referred to as the *denotation*.

This idea of denotation is important, because it is at this point that industries and individuals work to make meaning; the producers of media texts do this by *encoding* a text in a certain way (see Tools 3) and the receivers of media texts do this by analysing a text following those steps we went through in the previous chapter.

Both processes are social processes, because signs require someone to create them and someone to make sense of them. As we noted in Chapter 9, this means that signs themselves are social and, in being social, they make texts social, too.

As signs are social, we can say that they have a point of origin and a destination. We call the point of origin the **sender**. A sender might be any or all of those individuals or industries who encode a text in anticipation that the audience will read the text in a certain way.

We call the destination the **receiver**: the audience that analyses signs. Members of the audience analyse texts every time they break texts down into signs and then break signs down into signifiers and spreads of signifieds. As already noted, this is often done so quickly that we are rarely conscious that we are even doing it.

Signs need an audience—they cannot function without one. Therefore, signs need to attract audiences, and they attract audiences through the process of *address*. Address is the first stage in the dialogic relationship between texts and audiences we mentioned in Chapter 1. In effect, it is the text's attempt to enter into a dialogue with someone.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF ADDRESS?

The process of **address** is the way the text hails us, calls us over or otherwise demands our attention.

The position that is actively attracting us to the text we call the **addresser**. For anyone familiar with the Australian television series *Kath & Kim*, the addresser is the textual equivalent of 'Look at me; look at me'.

The audience implied by this position is called the **addressee**. The addresser and addressee are both textual constructs, that is, they only exist inside the text as opposed to the sender and receiver, who are real people in the real world and as such exist outside the text.

When we say that the addresser and addressee are textual constructs, we mean that we can identify the addresser and addressee (as they are actually parts of the text we are analysing), whereas we can never really identify the sender and receiver with any degree of certainty.

What is a lot easier to determine is the addresser and addressee because they are textual constructs. We simply need to look at the text to understand who they are.

#Sender: The text's point of origin.

#Receiver: The text's destination.

#Address: The way the text hails us, calls us over or otherwise demands our attention.

#Addresser: The position that is actively attracting us to the text.

#Addressee: The audience implied by being addressed.

WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO WORK OUT WHO IS THE SENDER OF A MEDIA TEXT?

Unlike literary texts, which we can usually attribute to a single author (and even that can be problematic; look at, for example, the debates over who really wrote Shakespeare's plays), media texts are usually the products of vast teams of people, making the apportionment of responsibility very difficult and identification of the sender even more so. Look at the credits for a film or a television series—it would be almost impossible to say who was the sender of these texts. Who was responsible for each element? Who was responsible for the original idea? Similarly, who is the sender of a song: the writer, the singer or the producer? Who is responsible for a news report: the reporter, the camera operator or the editor? What about comic books? Do we say that the writer or the artist is the sender, or maybe both, or maybe the editor?

The death of the author

Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, one of the most prominent French cultural studies theorists of the last forty years, addressed this issue when they referred to the concept of 'the death of the author'. Here, they are not referring to the literal homicide or suicide of authors, but are arguing for less attention to be paid to the intention of the author, in favour of focusing on the text itself. In part, this is because the intentions of the author (the sender) don't matter as much as the text itself and the meanings that the text carries. Most importantly, it means that texts can transcend their creation to evolve and change with the times.

Why is it almost impossible to work out who is the receiver of a media text?

Determining who is the receiver can be just as difficult. A finance report may be designed for a business audience, but some viewers may tune in because the host is well known. *Cleo* magazine is designed for a female audience, but is sometimes read by men trying to understand the female experience. *Fantasia* was an animated Disney film designed to introduce audiences to classical music, but it enjoyed renewed popularity in the 1960s because of drug users who found watching the film while high provided a great trip. Even the media texts we refer to in this book were intended primarily for entertainment, not academic study. It's therefore next to impossible to determine who the receiver will ultimately be.

THE ADDRESSER

Addressers can be identified as characters within a text who address us in some way. They may be looking at us, as models do in advertisements, or as people do from the covers of magazines or from their photos on social networking sites. Or they may speak to us, as do talk show hosts—or journalists, comedians, entertainers and bloggers. The addresser is the 'I' of the text. Further:

- There are often multiple addressers in any one text, especially where there is a combination of written and visual elements, so a photo and a headline may each act as an addresser.

- Addressers are signs that encourage us to engage with the text, and then go on to read the text.
- Addresser is most often a dual role, in which two aspects of the text simultaneously address the audience. On the one hand, the text itself addresses us via a headline on a newspaper, a strong visual in a television series or the opening chords of a song. On the other hand, a character inside the text, such as a newspaper columnist, a narrator or a singer, also can address us.
- We can think of the addresser as a dual role, because the addresser is simultaneously the newspaper and the columnist, the television series and the narrator, and the song and the singer.

NAME BADGES

Think of one of the simplest texts, the name badge worn by staff in retail stores such as Myer or Coles. Typically, these badges include the name of the store and the (first) name of the staff member. Even this simple text has a dual-addresser position: the addressee is simultaneously addressed by the store and the staff member as an agent for that store.

The implied addressee would be someone in that store (implied by the addresser store name) seeking service (implied by the staff member's name).

THE ADDRESSEE

You might be confused when we say the addressee is implied by the text. What we mean is that addressees are implied by the text because the addresser(s) necessarily imply a corresponding addressee, that is, someone it is hailing. Let's look at an example:

- An attractive, semi-clad woman on the cover of *Playboy* implies a male addressee.
- We can find out more about the addressee by reading the titles of the articles, looking at the age of the woman, the price of the magazine and any age restrictions on purchase.
- By looking at a combination of signs, we can build up quite a detailed picture of who the intended addressee might be.
- This does not prevent the magazine being bought by a lesbian or stolen by a 12-year-old boy—but we can gain an idea of the audience the magazine is constructing for itself.
- The addressee is, therefore, as much of a textual construct as the addresser.

By looking at how texts address us, we could construct similar addressee profiles for the addressees of *Cleo* and *Fantasia* (referred to above) as well as certain songs, television programs and newspapers. By looking at the evidence in the text itself, we could determine an addressee's gender, age, financial resources and location—and sometimes even their political leanings.

BE AWARE OF THE ADVERTISEMENTS

One of the best ways of determining the constructed addressee is to read, watch or listen to the advertisements that appear during, after or before the text that you're analysing. They give a clear indication of the audience that the text wishes to reach, because the advertisers are targeting



audience members with items they want them to purchase. To assist you, advertisers often place a premium on educated 18–49-year-olds, who are regularly identified as being the most affluent consumers as they have the most access to disposable income.

WHY IS IDENTIFYING THE ADDRESSER IMPORTANT?

Identifying the addresser is a way of determining the implied addressee, and this is important because it provides us with information about whom the text views as being part of its intended audience. As will be made clearer below, this can (sometimes) help us understand what the text is trying to do. Furthermore, it can better enable us to understand the possible relationships between a text, power and money, because audiences are the basis on which decisions are made about what is going to be produced, broadcast and printed. Audiences provide much of the commerce for the functioning of commercial media organisations.

THE WAYS IN WHICH SIGNS HAIL AUDIENCES

There are two ways in which signs seek or hail audiences:

- the passive form, called address
- the more active form, called interpellation.

These two ways of hailing audiences are not exclusive. Often they are layered, so a text can address us, and then interpellate us into the text.

Address

The first way signs seek out an audience is through this process of address. Signs construct an addresser that implies a corresponding addressee. The really interesting thing about address is that it creates ideas of **inclusivity** and **exclusivity**: some parts of the audience are addressed by the text (that is, they are included), while others are not (they are excluded). As we have seen in the examples above, this does not mean other members of the audience cannot access the text (unintended receivers, for example), but it is interesting that it is already establishing a power relationship between the text and its audience.

Address is an essentially passive way of seeking out audiences because it amounts to little more than the text looking at us or talking to us until we notice and engage with it.

Inclusivity: The inclusion of an audience member, as if he or she belongs to a certain community.

Exclusivity: The exclusion of an audience member, as if he or she has been excluded from a certain community.



Frozen

In practice, most media texts will address audiences on a number of levels. That's the basis of the idea 'fun for the entire family'—the notion that a media text can address adults and children in different ways (on different levels) simultaneously. The Disney film *Frozen* (2013) provides an

example of this. For children, *Frozen* is bright, funny (thanks to the snowman Olaf) and romantic (thanks to Anna's relationships with Hans and Kristoff), while for older children it is progressive (in that it celebrates sisterhood and strong, active female protagonists). Young female viewers particularly loved Elsa's dress; more than three million replicas of the dress were sold in the USA alone. For adults, *Frozen* is technically accomplished and a neat inversion of traditional fairy tales (the prince is a psychopath and the 'act of true love' is between sisters). Several of the jokes are pitched at adults and what appear to be a number of LGBT references recur throughout the storyline (Oaken seems to have a male partner, and Elsa's entire storyline and signature song 'Let it Go' can be read as a metaphor for coming out). *Frozen's* success in addressing audiences on different levels is evident in its incredible international box office success: \$1.274 billion, making it the highest-grossing animated film of all time.

Interpellation

The process of address is not the only way texts seek out audiences. A more active way is through the process of **interpellation**. Often, address and interpellation can work together, with address encouraging us to engage with the text, and then interpellation actually making us a part of the text. Signs invite, direct or encourage the audience to become a part of the text.

Interpellation, a term first used by the French philosopher Louis Althusser (1971), is an essentially active way of seeking out an audience, because it encourages the audience to actually contribute to the text in some way. Interpellation seeks out audiences by involving them in a variety of strategies to get them into the text—and each strategy involves a different level of audience investment.

These interpellation strategies take three forms, encouraging audiences to engage through:

- identification
- interaction
- narrative.

Understanding each of these strategies is important for media practitioners who want to build an audience for their texts, and for media consumers who want to be aware of how the media works.

Identification

'She looks great in that, so I'll look great in that ...'

In a number of narrative (and increasingly non-narrative) texts, audiences are encouraged to identify with a particular character; that is, an addressee position is not only implied by the text but actually created as a space within the text itself.

This space is cultivated through **audience identification** with a particular character in the text, which creates what we can term a **subjective viewing position** for the addressee to occupy.

Often, this identification might be with the hero (for example, we empathise with Peter Parker's plight and take pleasure in him becoming Spider-Man), but other positions may be created, too; for example, the audience often shares the point of view of the jury in legal dramas.

#Interpellation: Actively seeking out an audience; encouraging the audience to contribute to the text in some way.

#Audience identification: Encouraging audiences to adopt the viewpoint and share in the emotions (especially hopes and fears) of a character in the text.

#Subjective viewing position: The taking on of the viewpoint of a character in a text by an audience member; the addressee position actually created as a space within the text itself.

This idea of identification is also becoming more common in non-narrative forms:

- Talkback radio hosts often portray themselves as one of the people, encouraging identification.
- Notoriously, the idea of embedded journalists in Iraq (journalists who were part of military deployments) also constructed subjective viewing positions, leading to claims that this undercut their journalistic objectivity.

IDENTIFYING WITH ADVERTISING

Advertisements are still the primary media texts that construct an addressee position within their texts, encouraging you to identify with the person in the advertisement by suggesting that if you use their product you can become like them.

In this way the addresser becomes an aspirational figure for the addressee.

Interaction

‘Phone in now!’

Interaction interpellates the audience into texts by making the texts dependent on their involvement; for example:

- Talkback radio requires callers to phone in to generate discussion around particular issues.
- Reality television series are structured around the decisions audiences make to vote people in or out.

In each case, the audience is interpellated into the text, moving the text forward or deciding how the text will develop by deciding what gets discussed, who goes and who stays.

Narrative

‘And that means the killer must be ...’

Narrative is not just a way of structuring meanings into the form of a story (as defined in Schirato and Yell 2000), but also a desire among members of the audience to make a structured story out of the texts they engage with.

We can call narrative an active way of seeking out an audience because it actually involves the audience in the text. The audience can, for example, be encouraged to discuss who the murderer might be in a murder mystery, how people are related in a soap opera or whether characters will end up together in just about anything. The audience’s implication in the text is an important way of generating extratextual discussion (think back to our discussion in Chapter 1 of the water-cooler television series). Narrative also encourages and rewards ongoing investment in a series of media texts, thereby interpellating more audience members into the text.

Murder, She Wrote

The importance of narrative to interpellation may also explain the success of some genres, such as murder mysteries. Classic mystery series like *Murder, She Wrote*, *Hart to Hart* and *Magnum PI* interpellate audiences into their texts by presenting a mystery and encouraging audiences to

watch closely to gather up clues; the *Ellery Queen* series even broke the fourth wall by stopping and asking the audience directly to consider their solution (before the culprit was named). Other mystery series played with the formula; *Columbo*, for example, always revealed who was the killer at the outset, so the series became more of a howdunit rather than whodunit (how the killer committed the crime, how the killer would slip up and how Lieutenant Columbo would reveal them). The television movie *Murder in Space* (1985) went one step further. The movie, depicting murders among the crew of an international space mission returning to Earth from Mars, was shown without an ending and a competition (with prize money) set for viewers to uncover the killer (or killers). The resolution (and results) were then shown several days later. Such active audience interpellation in many ways prefigured the later shifts towards reality television and digital and social media.

WHAT ARE AUDIENCES?

Having said that signs can hail audiences in these different ways, we really need to pause for a moment and think about what it is we actually mean when we say ‘media audiences’. Thanks to technological advancements in media, today’s audience for a television series such as *Mad Men* is very different from the audiences that would have existed in the eras in which that show is set (the 1960s and 1970s). Indeed, technology means that the nature of being an audience member is in a constant state of flux and change.

By way of example, think of the 2009 Britney Spears’s song ‘Circus’. It opens with the line: ‘There’s only two types of people in the world, the ones that entertain and the ones that observe.’ This is certainly how it has been for many years: the classic idea of the media network where one group (‘the ones who entertain’, or the producers behind them) broadcasts and/or performs to many (‘the ones who observe’, or the consumers). But this is increasingly no longer the case. The lines between those that entertain and those that observe are being blurred all the time. Today, for the first time in history, anyone reading this textbook has the ability to make their own media—through websites, mashups, blogs, Twitter, Snapchat, posting on YouTube, etc. This means the mediasphere has moved away from being composed of one-to-many media networks, towards **audience networks** where audience members themselves access media texts through links with other audience members, whether it is via a blog, a Twitter or Facebook account or through statistically similar watchers of YouTube or buyers on eBay or Amazon. This is sometimes referred to as the *post-broadcast era* and is once again a confirmation of the mediasphere’s functioning as the most important part of the public sphere. Furthermore, it’s an indication of how the producer–consumer distinction is rapidly becoming a thing of the past, something discussed in Chapter 4, and returned to in Chapter 19.

#Audience networks:

Where audience members themselves access media texts through links with other audience members, replacing the broadcast one-to-many media networks.

WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES

Something that has not changed is that audiences consume media for different reasons and in different ways. You may watch reruns of *Star Trek* for pleasure or you may feel compelled to watch them as part of a media studies course. Similarly, you might pay far more attention to a film that

you have paid money to see than you might to the Top Forty on the radio while you're completing an assignment.

With audiences having so much power and choice, media companies and producers need to really know their audiences. They need to understand why audiences are consuming their media and how this particular audience is consuming them. Audiences are where media industries make their money; therefore, audiences actively determine what media texts industries will create—and distribute—throughout the mediasphere.

THE AUDIENCE EQUATIONS

Audiences + advertisers = money = further media production.

Commercial media produce content that delivers audiences to advertisers. Advertising revenue enables further media production.

The important distinction here is that commercial media sells audiences to advertisers *not* advertisements to audiences. It is you, your tastes, your habits, what you watch, where you go online and who your friends are that is being sold to advertisers, who then target advertisements to you. That could be an ad that pops up on the side of the webpage you're on, an ad that runs as part of a commercial break while watching television, or the repeated placement of a product in a television series that you watch. In all three examples, that revenue produced by advertising (along with the revenue derived from sales and merchandising, where applicable) is what keeps the television program, website or film series you're watching in production.

Audiences + merchandising = money = further media production.

While this is true of commercial media, a variation of the audience equation also applies to a lot of non-commercial media too, like public broadcasters. Production costs on PBS's *Sesame Street* are supported in large part from the amount of merchandise produced and sold around the program; think of how many different Tickle-Me-Elmos and cuddly Cookie Monsters have been sold over the years and you start to realise how important merchandising is to funding further public broadcast production. Similarly, we could point to the amount of product sold by the BBC (for *Top Gear* or *Doctor Who*) or through ABC stores in Australia for their slate of programming; in each case merchandising helps fund further media production.

For many years, the dominant way of thinking about the relationship between media and their audiences has been the **media effects model**.

This was the dominant way of thinking about the relationship between media and audiences, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, when it formed the basis of a number of media effects studies that attempted to measure scientifically psychological and/or behavioural reactions to media content.

The media effects model is still occasionally rehearsed by psychologists or policy makers today, as a popular commonsense or 'monkey see, monkey do' approach to how media influence the people who consume them. Think of, say, the debates over violence and sexual content in video

Media effects model:
The media effects model is like a hypodermic injection (like a hypodermic syringe) of messages by media into an essentially passive and vulnerable mass audience. It is sometimes also referred to as the direct effects or hypodermic syringe model.

games, music or film, where they are said to promote violence and moral degradation. These are all debates generated by a media effects model of media.

But it is important to remember that the media effects model has been criticised as being theoretically unsophisticated, especially in its treatment of audiences as unthinking, completely passive and willing to accept whatever is put in front of them. Robert Stam, for example, refers to such approaches as being founded on ‘the myth of facility’, which he describes as a ‘completely uninformed and somewhat puritanical notion that films [or any media really] are suspectly easy to make and suspectly pleasurable to watch’ (2005: 7). Here Stam uses the word ‘facility’ to link the perceived value of a cultural product to its ease of use. But as anyone who has ever had to share a television or babysit a young child knows, it is very hard to get someone to sit down and watch a television program that they are not interested in. Therefore, the idea of a purely passive audience falls apart pretty quickly when compared to one’s own experience.

Furthermore, the media effects that are measured under this model are relatively short-term changes in attitudes and behaviours, without considering the broader social, historical and cultural contexts of the media, and how they may have an impact on individual audience behaviours.

WAYS OF MEASURING AUDIENCES

Unsurprisingly, media organisations spend vast amounts of money in market research to try to measure audiences. These ways of measuring audiences take the following forms:

- pure statistical information
- demographic information
- focus group surveys
- reception studies.

Pure statistical information

Pure statistical information tells us about the number of people consuming media. This information includes:

- ratings (for television and radio)
- box office or gross ticket sales and income (for films)
- hits (for online media)
- sales and orders (for merchandise, games, books and comics)
- circulation and readership (for newspapers and magazines).

We refer to this way of measuring audiences as pure statistical information because it is solely interested in measuring the number of audience members consuming the text at any point in time. Such information does not tell us anything about the audience, or how members of the audience consume the text. Television **ratings**, for example, are simply ‘the mechanism by which people watching television are made into a commodity to be sold in lots of one thousand’ (Allen 1992: 19). They determine the percentage of homes using television at the time, but do not actually tell us anything about how individual audience members engage with the text.

#Ratings: Nightly and weekly surveys that are conducted to determine how many viewers are watching particular programs on particular channels. The results are used to attract advertisers and to determine programming schedules. The practice of ratings surveys is often referred to as the ‘ratings war’ between commercial television or radio stations.

Demographic information

Demographic studies tell us about the types of people consuming media. This is usually statistical information broken down according to the age, gender, socioeconomic bracket and/or geographical location of the audience consuming the text; for example, women aged 18–39 in the CBD or children aged 5–12 in the eastern suburbs. Unlike pure statistical information, demographics do tell us something more about the audience—for example, age and/or gender—though they still don't tell us anything about the ways in which audiences actually consume texts.

Tied into demographics is the notion of niche audiences (see below): the creation of media products that appeal to a certain demographic that is likely to consume it, likely to invest heavily in it or likely to buy ancillary products connected to it (through advertising), rather than simply appealing to the greatest number of people at any one point in time.

Focus group surveys

Focus group surveys tell us how and sometimes why audiences consume texts. Some studies can tell us more about the audience and how and why members of that audience consume texts. Sample questions could include:

- Do you consume the text every day?
- Do you sit down to watch television or do you move around the room while it is on?
- Do you listen to a radio or an iPod?

Reception studies

All of the ways of measuring audiences are **reception studies**, in that they are studying the receivers of media. But reception studies also exist as a discrete catch-all category to cover either those audience measures that combine a variety of measures or those targeted or focused studies that tell us about a particular audience and how and where it consumes texts.

Reception studies, for example, could look at the difference between consuming films in a cinema compared with watching them on television at home.

TYPES OF AUDIENCES

Measuring audiences in different ways means we can also talk about different *types of audiences*, of which there are four main groups:

- mass audiences
- niche audiences
- fan audiences
- culture jammers.

Reception studies:
studies of the ways in
which audiences consume
(receive) media.

Mass audiences

Traditionally, we describe media audiences as mass audiences. This refers to the fact that these are **mass media**; that is, media designed to attract the greatest number of audience members. Successful media texts can draw audiences in the millions, so mass audiences seem a good way of describing media audiences generally.

However, mass audiences can make it sound as if audiences are a passive, undifferentiated mass that all respond exactly the same way to the same media texts. When we look at the media effects model, we see why this cannot be the case: audiences are engaged by media in different ways, and they consume media in different ways and for different reasons.

The idea of a mass audience in which everyone thinks the same way does not really make sense. If media producers knew exactly how audiences would respond to any given media product at any given time, they would simply produce the same successful media products over and over again.

The media effects model depends on the idea of the mass audience. The ratings system for measuring audiences also depends on the idea of the mass audience, as it breaks audiences down into numbers: it is a purely quantitative analysis.

More significantly, mass audiences have been the product of traditional broadcast media, such as film and television—media that attempted to reach the broadest audiences possible. With the advent and increasing importance of new media (as we have seen throughout this book, particularly Chapter 4), media are moving away from traditional notions of mass audiences and broadcasting towards niche audiences and **narrowcasting**.

Niche audiences

Niche audiences are measured through **demographic analyses**: the percentage of consumers in a particular category—such as age, gender, race, sexuality and income band—who are consuming this particular media product. Media texts can now be directed towards certain audience types and remain profitable without having to appeal to every member of a mass audience. The value of a niche audience has been recognised in traditional media for some time (in television, for example, since at least the debut of *Hill Street Blues* in the 1980s), but is increasingly the province of new media.

Just as mass audiences are associated with broadcasting, niche audiences have become associated with narrowcasting (Hirst & Harrison 2007: 378).

THE DIGITAL REVOLUTION

For an example of a media industry targeting niche audiences, look at a couple of the digital free-to-air channels launched by Australia's television networks as part of the changeover to digital television. Channel Seven, traditionally a mass audience, family network, launched 7mate (targeted to a largely male demographic). By contrast, Channel Nine, traditionally a mass audience network that skews to the male audience, launched Gem (targeted to a largely female demographic). Look at their programming to see how this targeting occurs in practice. Unlike their parent networks, these free-to-air networks are driven by demographics rather than ratings.

#Mass media: Media designed to attract the greatest number of audience members.

#Narrowcasting: The distribution of media content to increasingly segmented audiences, to the point where the advertising or media message can be tailored to fit the special needs or consumer profile of members of the targeted audience.

#Demographic analysis: The statistical analysis of audiences based upon selected population characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexuality, income, disability, mobility, education, employment status and location, which shows distributions of values within a demographic variable and changes in trends over time.



Fan audiences

Fan (short for 'fanatic') audiences refer to audience members most likely to invest emotionally in a particular media text and its ancillary products, including merchandise. Fan audiences are not independently measured by media industries, but the importance of the fan audience is certainly changing, and is dealt with in greater detail in Chapter 19.

SQUEE!

The most important aspect of niche audiences generally (and fan audiences more particularly) is the idea of investment. With mass audiences splintering, media industries need audiences who are so passionately involved with media products they are more likely to heavily invest in them—to buy the concert tickets, purchase complete collections of *American Horror Story*, watch the *Walking Dead* spin-offs, read the original comics, upgrade to the latest *Call of Duty*, etc. What they are aiming for is a 'squee' that translates into cash.

'Squee' is a colloquialism coined to describe the sound made by a fan when they are excited (a portmanteau of 'squeal' and 'glee'). We could therefore talk about a 'squee factor', where 'squee' is an indicator of how invested in a particular media text somebody actually is. It could be argued that this is the media equivalent of the 'gruen transfer' in advertising, where consumers are so dazzled by a product that they lose track of their original intentions and become impulse buyers.

Culture jammers

These are audiences who actually speak back to media or otherwise interact with media in ways that are almost certainly unintended by the media producers. They could be graffiti artists, producers of publications such as *Adbusters*, slash fiction writers who publish fiction creating and exploring pornographic or homosexual relationships between characters in television series, or satirists who use media properties in a variety of ways, usually to comment on or make fun of the media. The process of **culture jamming** is sometimes also referred to as **détournement**.

WAYS OF READING MEDIA TEXTS

Quite clearly, each of these audiences reads texts in different ways, and within each of these audiences, individual audience members also read texts in different ways.

Remember, texts are made up of signs. Signs are naturally polysemic; that is, each has many meanings (many signifieds arranged in spreads of connotations). We can call this spread of signifieds or connotations a **paradigm**.

When we read a text we make a choice or selection from this paradigm. We call this choice the **syntagm**. So when we read signs, we make a syntagmatic selection from the paradigm of possible signifieds or connotations. The most obvious selection is the denotation (see Chapter 9).

Culture jamming: Resistance to cultural hegemony by means of guerrilla communication strategies such as graffiti, satire or some other reappropriation of the original medium's iconography to comment on itself. It differs from other forms of artistic expression or vandalism in that its intent is to subvert mainstream culture for independent communication or otherwise disrupt mainstream communication.

détournement: The reuse of a well-known text to create a new text that often carries a message contrary to the original.

Paradigm: The greatest spread of possible connotations that any signifier can have.

But, as we know, advertisers, spin doctors, directors and a number of other media producers are trying to encode signs to be read in certain ways. They are trying to make one set of connotations seem like the denotation. Media practitioners do this through metaphor, metonymy and anchorage, each of which is described in more detail in Tools 3.

This means individual audience members can undertake a variety of readings. They can make:

- a *preferred* reading, where they believe all of what they're told
- a *negotiated* reading, where they believe some of what they're told
- an *alternative* or *oppositional* reading, where they don't believe in what they are told, or they completely reject it.

In this book we're trying to provide you with another way of reading a media text—an **empowered reading**—by which you accept only some of what is being presented to you, because you are aware of how media work, how you can be manipulated and what choices are being offered to you by the larger mediasphere.

The way you can make an empowered reading is by performing textual analysis (see Chapter 9), understanding the concepts presented in this chapter and the one before it, and applying the tools presented in Tools 3. We want to make you aware of how you can break down a text, how texts work together and how texts are framed.

But at this stage you may still be wondering why this is all so important. To understand this, we need to think about what it is that a media text actually does.

WHAT DOES A MEDIA TEXT ACTUALLY DO?

So far we have seen that texts are made up of signs, and that each sign is composed of a signifier and a possible spread of signifieds called connotations. The most likely one is the denotation.

Every media text, regardless of whether it is an internet meme or a breaking news bulletin, shares these same structural features. This is because all media texts are involved in **mediating** something; that is, they are all involved in communication: communicating a message, whether information, entertainment or a mixture of both. This also means that every media text is fundamentally doing the same thing: providing a **representation** of the world.

WHY ARE MEDIA TEXTS REPRESENTATIONS?

In mediating information, every text has to make a selection of what to include, what to focus on and what to discard when presenting its message to you. Because of this, no media text can be reality—rather, it is a mediation of reality, a selection of elements from reality that is then communicated to you.

This selection of elements—the representation within each and every media text—represents the world in a different way, whether within a film, a television series or the nightly news.

This becomes easier to understand if you look at media texts from other cultures. If you have ever watched a film or read a book in translation, you will know that there are some words that have no corollary in English. This is how the English language has developed: by appropriating words from other languages to fill the gaps in its own.

#Syntagm: The selection that an audience member makes from the paradigms of possible connotations.

#Empowered reading: A reading of media informed by an understanding of how media work, how audiences can be manipulated and the choices being offered to audiences in the larger mediasphere.

#Mediation: The function of media; the communication of messages, whether information, entertainment or a mixture of both, by media.

#Representation: The selection of elements that media communicate to audiences; those aspects of the world that media 're-present' to audiences.



Cultural representations

As McKee (2001) notes, every culture and every part of these cultures (what we might call subcultures, based on gender, age, race and sexuality) represents the world differently, from extremely dissimilar cultures (such as Indigenous cultures, which are primarily oral, and Anglo-Celtic ones, which are primarily written) to subtly different ones of the same nationality, such as men and women, senior citizens and youth, and queer and straight people.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR REALISM AND AUTHENTICITY?

When we talk about the world, we are really talking about reality: the world as it exists for us in our day-to-day lives. As we cannot experience all that the world has to offer—and sometimes we might not wish to—we rely on media to present us with entertainment and/or information on events and situations to which we would not otherwise have access. This could be a news report on unrest in Tibet or a documentary about a voyage under the sea. But it could just as easily be a zombie apocalypse (as in *The Walking Dead*) or life inside a prison (as in *Orange is the New Black*).

As we have seen, all media, whether a fictional or factual, represent the world to us. No media text can ever fully reproduce reality; it can only communicate parts of it. Even the most graphic photograph of a war zone, for example, cannot provide the sound of battle. Even the most immersive virtual reality game cannot provide the smell of a flower. Every media text is the product of a vast number of decisions about what to include and what not to include in its representation, as well as being limited by time, finances and other resources—and the particular nature of the medium.

Think of the different ways of seeming real that appear in a variety of media texts, from documentaries, photojournalists' images and embedded journalists' reports to programs such as *Judge Judy*, *Survivor*, *Empire*, *Boston Legal* and *Grey's Anatomy*. Each media text is negotiating a different relationship with reality, making you forget (or reminding you) that this information and/or entertainment is just a representation.

This is important for two reasons. First, it raises a number of questions about human beings' peculiar relationship with reality, ideas we return to in our discussion of postmodernity in Chapter 20.

THE UNCANNY VALLEY THEORY

Japanese roboticist Masahiro Moti developed the uncanny valley theory in the 1970s. This principle states that as something is made more humanlike in its appearance and motion, the emotional response from a human being to the creature or object will become increasingly positive and empathetic, until a point is reached at which the response suddenly becomes strongly repulsive: 'This chasm—the "uncanny valley"—represents the point at which a person observing the creature or object in question sees something that is nearly human, but just enough off-kilter to seem eerie or disquieting' (Bryant 2006).

We increasingly empathise with something that looks more human (think of C-3PO from *Star Wars*), but if that creature or object appears too humanlike our compassion peaks, then plummets into a chasm of emotional detachment and disgust—because we become hypercritical of the creature or object’s lack of humanity, such as shadows on a face, eyes not moving quickly enough or a failure to subtly change facial expressions.

Originally, this idea was applied to robotics, but now it is increasingly used to account for the relative success and development of *anime*, special effects, digital game characters and even audience receptions of animated features such as *The Incredibles* and *The Polar Express*. That is, animated characters can look real, but not too real to be ‘eerie or disquieting’, something *The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn* had to negotiate when it presented the Belgian comic characters in motion-capture 3D.

Second, it raises questions about how reality can be simulated. You can, for instance, think about these ideas of **realism** across a spectrum of filmmaking practices:

- From the 1940s to the 1960s, black-and-white film stock was considered more authentic—more real—than colour film stock. This was perhaps best demonstrated by the black-and-white scenes shot in Kansas (the real world) compared with the colour scenes shot in Oz (the fantasy world) in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. It was an assumption that continued until the advent of colour television.
- Today, gritty film stock and handheld video cameras seem more real—more authentic—than glossy colours and steadicam photography. This was originally a style used for documentary filmmaking, but is now also used in police series (starting with *NYPD Blue* in the 1990s) and music videos.
- You could also think about ideas of the ‘filmic real’; for instance, the way a flare or drops of water are left on a camera lens or reproduced in an animated film to demonstrate how a particular image was captured; or the way live television represents liveness through the use of an audience, apparently ad-libbed remarks or presenters breaking up on camera or otherwise fluffing their lines.

Any and all of these techniques were, at one stage or another, perfectly legitimate ways of seeming real and each of these ideas of realism can be compared and contrasted with ideas of **authenticity**. Whereas realism attempts to merely simulate reality, authenticity intends to adhere as closely as possible to reality—to reproduce what actually happened.

Reality television provides an example of how these distinctions work in practice. From cooking series like *MasterChef* and *My Kitchen Rules* to survival shows like *I’m A Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here!* and anything featuring Bear Grylls, these programs attempt to simulate realism, giving viewers the sensation of immediacy or unlimited fly-on-the-wall access by concealing their modes of production as much as possible (the careful choice of location, the presence of a camera crew, and the choice of which shots to use to paint people in the best or worst light).

By contrast, news reporting and documentaries (should) attempt to provide, as far as possible, an unmediated, truly **objective** view of what is occurring in the world. Their aim is to be as authentic as possible and avoid **subjectivity**.

#Realism: The way in which media try to represent ideas or situations in ways that members of the audience believe are real.

#Authenticity: The way in which media try to represent ideas or situations as near as possible to how they occur in reality—the principal aim of journalism.

#Objectivity: The application of observation and experimentation to reality in order to avoid bias or prejudice; the principle that requires journalists to be fair, nonpartisan, disinterested and factual.

#Subjectivity: The addressing of reality through individual experience, perception and interpretation; the expression of an individual’s point of view.

REALITY AND JOURNALISM

If we claim that reality is just a representation, it can seem as if we're sitting at odds with the requirement that journalists report the truth. Sometimes journalists have a problem with this idea of news being just another representation, but this should in no way stop journalists from undertaking truthful reporting. Rather, the idea of reality as a representation must be something journalists should be aware of, because good journalists should always try to ensure that their report is as real, truthful and authentic a record of what is happening as possible. Being aware that reality can be just another representation should make journalists aware of the many instances of bias that can creep into news production, and make them try to compensate for that.

WHAT IS REPRESENTATION?

Representation is both the process and the product of media texts—the practice and the result. Media texts do not present the world as it is to us. They are not real despite how 'life like' they may appear. They are constructed. We can only experience the real directly. Instead, media texts 're-present' the world to us. Media texts construct the world in a certain way, conveying a message to us through the signs they use. *This is the process or the practice of media texts.*

Media texts are also a representation of the world. Newspapers, television series, comic books, radio, films and news reports all offer us texts that represent the world in a certain way. *This is the product or the result of media texts.*

So mediation is the act of re-presenting information to an audience (that's the practice) and providing us with a representation of information (that's the end result) constructed by a range of signs.

The American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce explored this connection between signs and the representation of objects and ideas. He concluded that there were three types of signs involved in representation:

- *Iconic*: a sign linked to the object or idea it represents by some shared quality, such as a photograph, a painting or even those stick-figure people that appear on the back of cars.
- *Indexical*: a sign linked to an object or idea it represents through some actual connection so as to compel reaction, such as a detour sign with an arrow blocking your progress or an alarm or smoke billowing from a house.
- *Symbolic*: a sign linked to an object or idea it represents only through a shared cultural consensus of custom or usage, such as language (like 'cat' or 'dog').

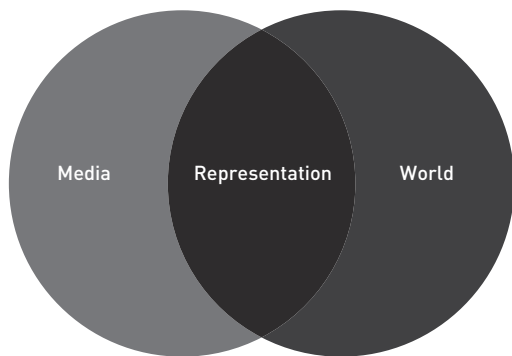
Depending on the type of media text (visual, aural, written or a combination of all three) they will use a range of these signs to construct their representation. So a web page may construct a representation using iconic, indexical and symbolic signs, whereas a photograph may only use iconic and indexical signs.

Importantly, all texts do this, from your great-uncle's home movies to the latest Spielberg blockbuster. As Nick Lacey says: 'Even straightforward holiday snapshots attempt to convey what it was like to be at a particular place at a specific time' (1998: 6). What is clearly different is that some texts—and therefore some representations—will be more significant than others. This significance depends on the text's place in the mediasphere and the larger public sphere.

THE TREACHERY OF IMAGES

Perhaps the most famous example of how representation operates is the painting *The Treachery of Images* by Belgian surrealist René Magritte in 1928–29 (known as *La trahison des images*, in the original French). It is a painting of a pipe with the words ‘*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*’ (French for ‘This is not a pipe’) painted beneath. Here, Magritte identifies that the text (the painting) is only a representation of a pipe, not a pipe itself. As Magritte himself explained: ‘The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it’s just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture “This is a pipe”, I’d have been lying!’ (Torczyner 1979: 71).

FIGURE 10.1 Representation: a mediation of the world



HOW DO MEDIA TEXTS BECOME SIGNIFICANT?

Significance, whether social significance or political significance, cannot be achieved via a single text. Therefore, the logic of representation in popular culture is intertextual. Remember from Chapter 9 that intertextuality is the relationship between texts. Texts do not exist in isolation but are interdependent and frequently make meaning through their relationship with other texts.

The more a text is referenced in other texts, the more significant the text becomes and the greater the impact that text’s representation of the world will have.

#Significance: The impact of a particular media text’s representation of the world. It refers to social and political significance, and is derived from the number of times a media text is referenced in other texts; the more it is referenced, the more significant a media text will become, and the more impact that text’s representation of the world will have.

HOW DO MEDIA TEXTS WORK TOGETHER?

If we think of media texts as intertextual, then we return to thinking about texts as chains or webs, rather than operating in isolation. This is the mediasphere (see Chapter 1), which is composed of millions of texts that provide multiple representations of the world, connected to each other in both subtle and obvious ways.

In this way, texts speak to each other as much as they speak to an audience. We can characterise this relationship between texts and between texts and audiences as dialogic (see Chapter 1). This means that:

- texts engage each other in *intertextual* dialogues
- texts engage audiences (through the process of address or interpellation) in *textual* dialogues

- as we have already noted in Chapter 1, engaging in a dialogue is a fundamental part of social action, which means that texts and readings can be used to impose cultural dominance as well as offering sites of *resistance*
- in this interaction, we can begin to understand the connections between *textuality* and *power*
- representation therefore also gives us information about the process of power and politics.

If you're unclear how these ideas of representation, significance and power interrelate, think of this in relation to **stereotypes**: those dangerously neat little labels that categorise people in easily recognisable social or cultural groups, usually in negative terms (Sardar & Van Loon 2000: 75).

stereotype:
oversimplified,
standardised image or
idea held by one person or
social group about another.



STEREOTYPES

Think about your reaction to these words:

- Indigenous
- Muslim
- blonde
- American
- bogan
- academic.

Write down a list of your immediate reactions to each word.

Look at each one again. Do you actually know any person who fits all or any of your negative stereotypes? Think about how people in each group are represented in the media. This is often their denotation: a particular stereotype that is reinforced through multiple media representations.

Stereotypes are not always false. Sometimes a generalised representation of a group in society may contain an element of truth that is universally applied or blown out of proportion.

While the media certainly contribute towards inventing or reinforcing stereotypes, they can also subvert them, as illustrated by the *Queer as Folk* television show.



Queer as Folk

The English (and later US) series *Queer as Folk* presented a full and frank discussion of homosexuality in the 1990s. Without being overly sentimental, it revealed the lives of homosexual people in a funny and often touching way to a mixed straight and gay audience. Along with series such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and *Will & Grace*, it was one of a number of positive representations of homosexuality in the media that subverted a lot of the then current stereotypes of homosexuals, something maintained by later series such as *Glee*, *Beautiful People*, *Torchwood* and *Looking*.

HOW DO REPRESENTATIONS FUNCTION WITHIN THE PROCESS OF POWER AND POLITICS?

When we look at texts intertextually, we can start to consider their representations in aggregate. You may already be familiar with some of the words that academics use to describe representations, but you should also be aware that they have a number of meanings, depending on who you ask, and in which subject and which context you are using them.

Three of these terms are:

- discourse
- ideology
- myth.

These words all describe how media representations function in relation to power and politics, so let's look at each one in more detail.

Discourse

For our purposes, **discourse** is a way of representing the world. You could think here of medical, legal, religious, academic or political discourses, as well as the discourses of slang, comic books or romance fiction. We can think of each of these as a discourse because each offers a different viewpoint of the world, founded on; for example:

- rights or duties (political or legal discourse)
- morals and ethics (philosophical discourse)
- a belief in God or gods (religious discourse)
- a belief in transcendent power (comic book discourse)
- a belief in fair representation and due process (legal discourse)
- a belief that all redheaded men can be called Bluey (slang discourse).

Further, each of these discourses is made up of a number of representations across a range of (inter)texts. So, for example, legal discourses are constructed out of case law, statute law, court rituals and popular representations of law, to name just a few.

#Discourse: A way of representing the world.

HOW DO DISCOURSES AND TEXTS FIT TOGETHER?

Central to our understanding of texts and representations is the work of Michel Foucault, which provides a theoretical framework for focusing on representation and understanding under discursive regimes (hierarchies of discourses). Our approach is to read texts for their meanings, bearing in mind the discourses they work within, and that part of their function is to act as a representation of the world. This is why, when we look at texts, we break down the text (look at its meaning), consider its context (as an indicator of the discourse[s] they work within) and explore their intertexts (as an indicator of how they may be representing the world).



Ideology

Ideology: A set of ideas, assumptions or beliefs for thinking about the world.

An **ideology** is a set of assumptions or ideas about the world, which is often more overtly political or religious than a discourse. Communism and humanitarianism are major ideologies, believed in by millions of people, that in part derive from such documents as *The Communist Manifesto* and the *International Declaration of Human Rights*.

The word 'ideology' has a lot of baggage around it. The cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1976), for example, considered ideology could equally refer to ideas generally, beliefs held by a particular group, or illusory beliefs and false ideas. By contrast, Louis Althusser argued that ideology is another form of representation, an 'imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser 2001: 109).

For our purposes, we define ideology as the thinking that often underpins discourse. If discourse is a way of seeing the world, then ideology is way of thinking about the world based on certain ideas, assumptions or beliefs (beliefs in the importance of capital or class, for example, as in a capitalist ideology or a bourgeois ideology). Importantly, ideology works the same way as a sign. It interpellates us into the ideology by hailing us and encouraging us to assume the identity and societal role constructed by these ideas, assumptions or beliefs.

As one of the primary forms of communication and carriers of meaning in modern societies, media can therefore often function as an ideological state apparatus, part of that hegemonic control we outlined in Chapter 1.

HOW DO WE BECOME AWARE OF IDEOLOGY IN TEXTS?

The approach is similar to analysing texts for their discursive relationships. When we look at texts, we break down the text (look at its meaning), consider its context (as an indicator of both the discourse(s) they work within *and* the ideology(ies) they contain) and explore their intertexts (as an indicator of the ideas, assumptions and beliefs they may be relying upon in how they represent the world).

Althusser termed such a form of reading 'symptomatic reading', or a heightened sensitivity in the reader to the presence of both the underlying ideology of the text and the text's role in cultural hegemony.

Myth

Myth: An ideology that has become so accepted, so commonplace, that it is no longer recognised as an ideology.

In media studies, **myth** is not just a collection of tales from ancient Greece or Rome—it is an ideology that has become so accepted, so commonplace, that we no longer recognise it as an ideology. Roland Barthes contended that myths perpetuated and normalised ideas that served the interests of those in control. Here meaning was no longer arbitrary, but made to serve the interests of the producers of the texts. To most people in a particular society, the myth seems real and right; there seems to be no other way of viewing the world.

But myths change over time. They have included, during different periods of history, the idea that the world was flat, the idea that some races are superior to others, the idea that women are inferior to men and the idea that some wars are justified. Currently we could add myths around the need to drink bottled water (versus tap water) or the need to carry a mobile phone on us at all times.

Myth is denotation on the broadest possible scale. Several stereotypes have become myths; for example, the Nazi myth, by which the government in Germany before the Second World War took some old-fashioned stereotypes about Jewish people, then expanded those ideas into an ideology in order to justify their attempt to destroy the whole Jewish people. More often, a myth that can seem perfectly acceptable (indeed, commonsense) in one cultural or historical context can be completely unacceptable in another; for example, the myth of imperialism, which was the assumption by European countries before the 19th century that they had the right to take control of any non-European country that seemed 'uncivilised'.

Importantly, myths are not always negative or pejorative. Examples of myths that have long been a part of Australian society include that of the Aussie battler, the concept of mateship, the idea of a fair go and the importance of sport in our national identity. We are not saying that these myths are right or wrong; we are just identifying them as ideologies that have become so widely accepted, so commonplace, that they seem to be essential parts of being Australian and therefore go largely unquestioned.

As consumers of media, you should be aware of how myth functions, and the myths that may be currently circulating through the mediasphere. Similarly, when approaching texts from other cultures and other times, be aware of the myths that inform these texts and factor those into your reading.

BACK TO THE MEDIASPHERE

The acceptance of discourse and ideologies—and the way in which some ultimately become myths—occurs through two terms you will already be familiar with: hegemony and pluralism. As you may recall from Chapter 1, hegemony is the ability of the ruling classes in any society to rule by consent, because the media persuade us that it is in our best interests to accept the dominance of this elite. Pluralism is the term we use for diversity in society, including in the media. Pluralist media offer us a wide range of choices. Again, some scholars prefer to link this term to discourse, proposing that a range of discourses offers us a truly pluralistic view of society.

In this way, audiences and texts operate as the building blocks of the mediasphere. Regardless of how persuasive the discourse, how prevalent the ideology or how deceptive the myth might be, it is always at the level of text and audience—and the relationship between them—that media work.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The idea of the mediasphere can be broken down into the concept of separate media texts, which can be further broken down into signs, signifiers and signifieds.
- The social function of signs include the concepts of connotation (the possible spread of signifieds) and denotation (the most likely signified).
- Signs engage with audiences via address or interpellation.
- Address creates ideas of audience inclusivity and exclusivity.
- Interpellation strategies take three forms, encouraging audiences to engage through identification, interaction and narrative.
- Types of audiences include mass audiences, niche audiences, fan audiences and culture jammers.
- Audiences can be measured through statistical information, demographic information, focus group surveys and reception studies.
- When reading texts we make syntagmatic selections from the paradigm of possible signifieds or connotations.
- This has implications for realism and authenticity in the creation of text.
- Representation is both the process and the product of media texts—the practice and the result.
- Texts work together to create discourses, ideologies and myths in the larger mediasphere.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the differences between address and interpellation?
- 2 Explain the role of the audience in audience networks and the audience equation.
- 3 What is representation?
- 4 How is this connected to power and politics?
- 5 What is the relationship between discourse, ideology and myth?

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11

CELEBRITY

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

A film star from the 1950s. A 40-something politician in an openly gay relationship. The teenage star of a television sitcom. The 30-year-old single mother who has just won a reality television series. An overweight British director. The winner of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. A boy caught enthusiastically swinging a light sabre on YouTube. The chief executive officer of New York's most famous hotel chain. Two miners who spent an agonising fortnight trapped beneath the earth. The author whose books sell a million copies in one day. Anyone with the surname Kardashian.

All of these people are celebrities. Some will remain celebrities longer than others. Some will have vast amounts of column space devoted to their private lives, their relationships and their affairs. Some will start their own clothing brands. Some will fade back into obscurity. But for a while, each and every one of them will be famous.

What is it that fascinates us about celebrities? Why is so much of our journalism devoted to reporting what they do? And why do so many of us want to be one?

In this chapter we look at:

- what a **celebrity** is
- types of celebrity
- why celebrities are important.

#Celebrity: The familiar stranger; a celebrity is simultaneously a text and an industry.

WHAT IS A CELEBRITY?

In Part 2 we looked at media industries ranging from print and radio to film and television. As well as calling each of these a media industry, we can also call these industries cultural industries because of ‘their crucial role in producing and disseminating the most popular forms of cultural expression in modern societies’ (Turner & Cunningham 2002: 14).

This means that the texts these industries produce—for example, the magazines that are produced by the print industry, the television series that are produced by the television industry, and the radio programs that are produced by the radio industry—can also be thought of as **cultural products**.

Examples of these cultural products include the film *Psycho*, the television series *Gossip Girl*, the magazine *Vanity Fair*, the *Times* newspaper, *The War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, a Justin Bieber video or Marvel’s *Avengers* comic books.

Each of these media texts functions as a cultural product because it communicates a series of meanings, values and ideas. Some, like the *Times* newspaper or a documentary on Iraq, are more involved in communicating information. Others, such as *Cleo* magazine or television series like *Gossip Girl*, are more involved in constructing or negotiating different forms of identity based on gender, age or more nebulous ideas of taste and style. And still more, such as the nightly news, do both.

Celebrities are also cultural products, communicating a variety of ways of being. Celebrities construct or negotiate forms of identity, and can be both inspirational (‘I want to be like that person’) and aspirational (‘I want to be that person’).

What makes celebrities significant texts is the increasing attention they receive in the news and mediasphere as a whole. As more and more attention is devoted to celebrity—reporting who they are, what they do and how to become one—we might well ask: is the mediasphere itself becoming more about providing ideas of identity than information? If so, then this is a significant shift which may have some serious implications for the operation of journalism as the Fourth Estate.

One way of describing this shift is in terms of **celebrity culture**—a culture that is founded upon the individual and individual identity; for example, newspapers that consist mainly of gossip, scandal and PR material issued by celebrities’ agents. In celebrity culture, social issues are ignored, or told only in terms of the activities of celebrities.

Since the notion of celebrity is now such an intrinsic part of the news cycle, it becomes important to understand how celebrity functions: what celebrities are, the elements of celebrity and what it is celebrities actually do.

WHERE DOES CELEBRITY COME FROM?

Academic interest in celebrity originally sprang from an interest in film stars. For simplicity’s sake, we’ll use the term ‘celebrity’ in this chapter because, as you will see in Table 11.1 (later in the chapter), celebrity has become a catch-all term for a type of individual whose image circulates in the media, of which the film star is just one example.

Cultural product:
A product that contains meanings, values and ideas, that is, a product that functions as a form of communication.

Celebrity culture:
A culture based on the individual and individual identity, for example, news that consists mainly of gossip, scandal or snippets from celebrities’ PR stunts, or where social issues are constantly framed as personal issues.

Todd Gitlin (2001) defines the celebrity as ‘the familiar stranger’. The definition is a good one because it refers to the way celebrities can simultaneously be known by the audience and yet must necessarily remain, forever, at a distance.

Members of the audience feels as though they know the celebrity through media appearances, the gossip they read in magazines and the photos they see; that is, they become familiar. At the same time, the audience can never really know the celebrity, because all the information they consume is mediated through various media texts; that is, the celebrity remains a stranger. All the audience really knows about the celebrity is the image that they see in the media.

The parasocial relationship

Chris Rojek (2001) describes the way audiences can develop parasocial relationships with people they know only through the media, in ways that are similar to real friends and colleagues. This is especially applicable to celebrities who we might see over and over again; for example, hosts on morning television or film stars we continually watch in the cinema. In this way we start to feel as though we know the celebrity as well as the other people we encounter in our day-to-day lives.

Nor is the celebrity a new phenomenon. As Todd Gitlin notes, the celebrity is not ‘unprecedented in history’: ‘People have long imagined a world populated by figures who were not physically at hand and yet seemed somehow present ... What has changed is the magnitude of the flow, the range of characters that enter our world, their omnipresence, the sheer number of stories’ (2001: 22).

According to Miller (1998: 599), ‘by the Depression, Hollywood stars were the third biggest source of news in the United States’, but today’s growth in media forms is creating a greater proliferation and wider variety of celebrities than we have ever seen before. As Catharine Lumby says, the ‘evolution of celebrity in the twentieth century is intimately related to the evolution of technologies for making individuals public’ (2004: 112). Celebrity is therefore very much a creation of this ongoing blurring of the private and public spheres that we first discussed in Chapter 1.

THE HISTORY OF CELEBRITY

Like so much of modern society, the origins of celebrity can be found in ancient Rome, where rulers would use statues and coins to promote themselves, so all the members of their society would know them. Today that practice continues: Australian coins bear the face of the head of state (the Queen), while US currency bears the face of former heads of state (presidents). When Iraq fell to US forces, among the first things US troops did was tear down the statue of Iraq’s ruler, Saddam Hussein, and take all the currency bearing his image out of circulation.

Famed documentarian David Attenborough, who has become a celebrity himself, explains that as tribes became bigger, those with power sought ways to reach all members of their tribe, to make themselves as visible as possible (BBC 2001). Clearly, those with power could no longer meet with all the members of their tribe in person, so they had to create something that would stand in their place; something that could function as a signifier of themselves. They used a **celebrity image**: an image specifically designed to convey ideas of the celebrity and their values. They placed their image on artwork—pottery, statues and pictures—as well as currency, to make themselves visible,

#Celebrity image: The image of the celebrity as it appears in the media; a construction designed to connote the ideas and values of the celebrity.

to make themselves known and to circulate their representation among the tribe so everyone would know them.

Until the 20th century, artwork and currency functioned in a way similar to the modern media, standing between the tribe and the person with power, mediating that person to the tribe through products bearing their image.

With the advent of the printing press, celebrity was developed through advertising, monographs and volumes. Chapbooks sensationalising the stories of highwaymen and rogues such as Dick Turpin and Jonathan Wild made these people celebrities in much the same way as the outlaw Jesse James became a celebrity in the American West or the bushranger Ned Kelly became a celebrity in rural Australia. As early as the 1820s, theatres were advertising certain actors' names to promote their productions; the Shakespearean actor Edmund Keane became famous as a result. In Victorian England, entire compendiums of celebrity were produced. These celebrities were high-profile people of the time, including scientists, authors and other great thinkers.

As media continued to develop, so too did the ability to capture the image through photography and film, rather than engravings and woodcuts, and circulate that image to wider and wider audiences.

THE CLOSE-UP

As the BBC documentary series *The Human Face* (BBC 2001) notes, one of the key advancements in the development of celebrity came with the advent of the close-up. Before this, stage actors always remained in the distance, as slightly obscure figures. The close-up meant that, for the first time, people could see the faces of those acting on the screen. For film actors, this had the effect of making their head seem twice as big as everyone else and therefore seem twice as important. The close-up provided an intimacy and a point of identification between the audience and the actor—it made the stranger familiar. The close-up is still a common device in film, often replicated in different ways in other media, such as the standard two-shot in television, the head shot that adorns magazines and the way news readers (and often reporters) are framed as they speak to camera. If you ever want a reminder of how important the face is for a celebrity, just look at a PEZ candy dispenser; the only recognisable sense of character is the plastic head that tops the dispenser tube and yet it is enough to signify celebrities from NASCAR drivers and Elvis to the crews of the USS *Enterprise*.

THE CHANGING NOTION OF CELEBRITY

We can now start to map the ways in which celebrity is considered in culture. Allied to the developments discussed above were two important changes in the way celebrities were presented, and in what they could do.

First, a number of separate industries developed around the celebrity. These became devoted to promoting and publicising them, and to exploring the parallel narratives of their personal lives, their backgrounds and their scandals. This started with early gossip magazines such as *Broadway Brevities* (1916), and continued through publications such as *Confidential* (1950s) and the sexually explicit *Hollywood Star* (1970s) to the supermarket tabloids such as the *National Enquirer*,

magazines such as *People* and *OK!*, and television programs such as *Entertainment Tonight*, the *E! News* network and *TMV*. A great number of these stories were created and circulated by the film studios themselves as part of their promotion and publicity campaigns, products of the overlap between cinema and public relations. For more on this see Chapter 8, as well as the film *LA Confidential* (for more about the early gossip magazines) and the television series *Entourage* (for more on the role of the agent in promotion and publicity).

THE CELEBRITY TIMELINE

Antiquity

- Images were circulated on coins and through statues.
- The people represented had real political and social power.
- Example: Julius Caesar (emperor of Rome).

1800s

- Images were circulated through engravings, illustrations, photographs and the popular press.
- The people represented were either leading social figures, scientists and writers or scandalous, murderous lowly criminals.
- Examples: Mark Twain (writer), Madame Curie (scientist) and Dick Turpin (criminal).

1900–today

- Images are circulated through film with the development of the close-up, magazines and tabloid newspapers, web pages and gossip sites, producing the notion of celebrity culture.
- The people represented come from many walks of life, but are predominantly actors, musicians or famous simply for being famous (or infamous).
- Examples: Charlie Chaplin (film star), Madonna (singer–actor), Lindsay Lohan (actor–addict) and Kim Kardashian (not quite sure really ...).

This growth in celebrity culture is fuelled by three overlapping phenomena:

- the development and proliferation of media
- globalisation, leading to greater international circulation
- convergence, or the coming together of media forms (see Chapter 19).

The second major change was in the power held by the celebrity. Celebrity originated in the desire of people who had real social and political power to be known by all of their tribe. As time went on, the wheel turned full circle, because celebrities (Hollywood stars this time), who otherwise would have held little political power, began to claim social power for themselves.

THE BIRTH OF THE HOLLYWOOD STAR

The Hollywood star was generated by the development of the close-up, which led to recognition and identification, along with an interest among the audience in the off-screen lifestyles of their favourite stars. US silent film comedian Charlie Chaplin could be recognised throughout the world. Wherever he went with his fellow silent film stars Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks, he would be mobbed and questioned about every detail of his marriages.



The star system

Originally, Hollywood was dismissive of stars, reluctant to lavish the costs in promotion required to make them famous for fear that they would become too powerful. But, slowly, Hollywood started to realise the wealth of stars as **commodities**. They could brand certain films (a Gary Cooper western, for example), celebrities could be traded between studios, and celebrity endorsements became a valuable form of advertising. Then actor (and later US president) Ronald Reagan, for example, advertised cigarettes during the 1940s.

So the star system was born. Studios kept stables of stars in much the same way as sporting organisations keep teams of athletes. Hollywood studio MGM, for example, used to promote itself as having 'more stars than there are in Heaven'. The star system continued until the break-up of the studio system in the 1940s and 1950s (see Chapter 6).

The first forms of power celebrities enjoyed were recognition (leading to further work in advertising) and remuneration (through the large salaries they received). Increasingly, they sought out more power, especially in terms of controlling their careers, which, under the star system, were still at the whim of film studio heads such as Louis B. Mayer of MGM and Jack Warner at Warner Brothers. This led Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie Chaplin and film pioneer D.W. Griffith to form their own studio, United Artists, on 5 February 1919, thus demonstrating both the increasing power of celebrities and the desire to control their own careers.

The Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers was founded in 1941, with the aim of preserving the rights of independent producers in an industry controlled by the five major film studios. This contributed greatly to the demise of the studio system and the rise of the independents (see Chapter 6).

The stars thrived in this new Hollywood. No longer locked into seven-year contracts with studios, they could exercise more control over their careers and command higher and higher salaries from independent studios eager to attach them to their projects. They became **bankable** stars; that is, their films were almost guaranteed to succeed simply because they appeared in them. We can see this power manifested in a number of ways, from Nicole Kidman's fee per film (reported to be \$20 million or more) through to Angelina Jolie's social power as an ambassador for the United Nations.

Fears in Hollywood over celebrities' power may also be destroying the system. On 22 August 2006, Paramount Pictures ended its 14-year contract with arguably the most powerful star then working in Hollywood, Tom Cruise. The company cited economic damage to his value as an actor because of his controversial public behaviour, particularly on the *Oprah* television show, as the reason for the termination. Ironically, the fact that Paramount dropped Cruise because of perceived damage to his image actually illustrates how important Cruise was to them. Even more ironically, in November 2006 Cruise and his production partner Paula Wagner took over United Artists, the company that was originally formed to champion celebrities' rights.

ELEMENTS OF A CELEBRITY

In his book *Understanding Celebrity*, media theorist Graeme Turner (2004: 1) lists four elements that are part of every celebrity:

#Commodity:

An economic good; in relation to celebrities, it refers to someone who is subject to ready exchange or exploitation within a market.

Bankability: The ability of a celebrity to make a guaranteed profit for their employer; a bankable Hollywood star can make a film succeed on the strength of his or her name alone.

- 1 Someone who emerges from a certain industry or otherwise attracts public attention. His or her fame does not always have to depend on the position or achievements leading to prominence in the first place. Madonna, for example, began as a respected figure in the music industry, but has attracted more media attention for her private life. Paris Hilton's main ability seems to be attracting public attention. Indeed, she is paid to attend parties because she is so good at it.
- 2 Someone who is made highly visible through the media. This includes politicians (such as the US president), criminals, businesspeople ... and Paris Hilton.
- 3 Someone whose private life often attracts greater public interest than their professional life. While Angelina Jolie's recent films still attract attention as an actor (for example, *Maleficent*, *Salt* and *The Tourist*) and a director (*Unbroken*), she remains a celebrity more because of her work for UNICEF, her preventative surgery against cancer, her marriage to Brad Pitt and her adoption of children from a wide variety of backgrounds. Paris Hilton's private life has filled far more magazines, papers and websites than has her professional life as an actress, author and fashion designer.
- 4 Someone who develops and promulgates a persona, aura or image. Most importantly, a celebrity is a construction—Lady Gaga gains constant media attention because of her ever-changing media image, usually as a result of her fashion choices, be it her outfit made out of Kermit the Frogs (2009) or her meat dress at the MTV Video Music Awards (2010). Paris Hilton exists purely as an image—a fun-loving socialite—though she has attempted to deepen this image by presenting herself as a savvy businesswoman, with mixed results.

Turner goes on to argue that 'we can map the precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity ... it occurs at the point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from reporting on their public role ... to investigating the details of their private lives' (2004: 8).

CAN JOURNALISTS BE CELEBRITIES?

As the above discussion shows, journalists also can be celebrities. The term 'celebrity journalist' was coined by James Fallows in 1986 when he stated that '[their] names appear in gossip columns and society pages ... We know when they wed ... when they become parents ... and when they get divorced' (in Shepard 1997: 26). Shepard links the appearance of the celebrity journalist to the work of journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, whose relentless investigative work led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974. Shepard (1997: 26) writes: 'The Watergate affair changed journalism in many ways, not the least of which was by launching the era of the journalist as celebrity.' By contrast, S. Robert Lichter (in Levy & Bonilla 1999: 84) believes that the era of celebrity journalism may have officially begun in 1976, when Barbara Walters became the first million-dollar anchor on ABC. As Boorstin (in Shepard 1997: 27) writes: 'A celebrity is a person who is known for his well-knownness ... journalists are the creators of well-knownness. In the process of creating well-knownness for others, it's not surprising that some of them become celebrities too. It's inevitable.'

WHAT IS THE CELEBRITY IMAGE?

The celebrity's image is, like other representations, not a real thing but a construction that appears in the media. It is, therefore, similar to the divide between sender and addresser (see Chapter 10): we can never really know Brad Pitt (as much as some of us would like to), just as we can never really

know the sender of a media text. But we can study and analyse 'Brad Pitt' as he appears in the media, just as we can study an addressee. Like an addressee, 'Brad Pitt' is a textual construct, a mediation of the real Brad Pitt and an image generated across a number of different texts. Indeed, some people like to spend a lot of time analysing Brad Pitt, just not always for academic purposes.

Sometimes the construction of an image is so complete that it supplants the individual. Entire lives, off screen and on screen, can be devoted to the maintenance of an image. Archie Leach, for example, was an actor who arrived in Hollywood in the late 1920s, then took the name of Cary Grant and constructed the image of Cary Grant, off screen and on screen. He had a particular look, a particular set of mannerisms and a particular way of being in the world. Similarly, Norma Jean Baker constructed the image of Marilyn Monroe. No doubt both did so with the support of their publicists and the rest of the Hollywood industry, but the fact that Marilyn Monroe and Cary Grant are remembered today, long after the deaths of Norma Jean Baker and Archie Leach, is a testament to the power of their images.

The celebrity image is therefore both an on-screen and off-screen construction. This is quite different from a celebrity assuming a role. We recognise, for example, that the Terminator, John Matrix, Alan 'Dutch' Schaefer, Douglas Quaid and Jack Clayton are all roles assumed by Arnold Schwarzenegger in a variety of films. These roles work together, with the off-screen texts (his marriage to Maria Shriver and his early career as a body builder) to create the image of 'Arnold Schwarzenegger', of which the latest manifestation was the 'Governator', while he was Governor of California. But in 2011, this on-screen heroic paternal image was disrupted by off-screen revelations of his infidelities and his fathering of (at least one) illegitimate child. Schwarzenegger's celebrity image became less stable as a result (his marriage ended and a number of movies he headlined bombed at the box office), leading some commentators to wonder what the name Schwarzenegger would now signify for future audiences.

The celebrity image, therefore, is an intertextual construction (see Chapter 10). Like any representation, the celebrity image is constructed across a variety of intertexts.

Previous scholars, such as Richard Dyer (1998), writing on Hollywood stars, and Andrew Goodwin (1992), writing on music stars, drew attention to the fact that stars' images are constructed through a series of intertexts. Dyer stated: 'A star's image is also what people say or write about him or her, the way the image is used in other contexts such as advertisements, novels, pop songs, and finally the way the star can become part of the coinage of everyday speech' (Dyer 1998: 2–3).

So a film star's image is not only established by the films in which he or she appears, but also by the interviews the star gives, and the scandals and gossip that surround their name.

THE MUSIC CELEBRITY

In popular music, the images of celebrities such as Lady Gaga, Rhianna, Justin Timberlake, Michael Jackson, Justin Bieber or Madonna are created by intertexts of gossip, film and video clips, together with their public appearances, music and lyrics. This may help to explain why the music celebrity, rather than the film star, is currently at the top of the celebrity hierarchy. Whereas for many years everyone aspired to be a film star, since the 1960s the music celebrity has become the more aspirational figure, thanks to Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and the Beatles. This may be because, following the advent of MTV in the 1980s, it is music celebrities who are best poised to take advantage of all that media

has to offer. They operate at the intersection of a wide variety of industries (print, music, online, film, television and merchandising) and have a product—their song—that can, and often does, travel globally without the need for complex translations. You can hear Katy Perry songs in Italy and Lady Gaga is loved in Japan. Films rarely travel as far, or are received as well.

The cumulative result of these intertexts is referred to as a **metanarrative** of the celebrity. It is built from all the narratives in all of the intertexts that represent the celebrity. Think of it as a kind of super-narrative. The narratives of Brad Pitt, Tom Cruise or Madonna, for example, are their images assembled through all of these intertexts.

#Metanarrative:

A super-narrative constructed from multiple narratives. An example would be a metanarrative of celebrity, built from all of the narratives in all of the intertexts that represent that celebrity.

TABLE 11.1 The celebrity of Michael Jackson

Let's look at how these intertexts work together in relation to Michael Jackson, the late, self-proclaimed king of pop. You may need to Google some of these names and references to find out more about them.	
Born	29 August 1958, Gary, Indiana, the seventh child of the Jackson family.
1964	At age five, he joins his brothers in the Jackson 5.
1970	He becomes 11-year-old frontman of the Jackson 5; they spend 13 weeks at No. 1 on the pop music chart: four releases sell more than 15 million copies. Their first album is called <i>Diana Ross Presents the Jackson 5</i> . The Jackson 5's first performance on the Motown label was appearing as special guests of Diana Ross and the Supremes, beginning Michael's lifelong friendship (or obsession) with Diana Ross.
1971	Jackson is now aged 12, and the <i>Jackson 5</i> cartoon from Hanna Barbera appears on Saturday morning television. Some commentators have claimed that seeing an animated version of himself at such a young age contributed to some of Michael's image issues.
1972	The single 'Ben' is No. 1 on the US pop singles chart. It is a song about a young man's affection for a rat. Again, some commentators claim this is an early example of Jackson's freakish tendencies.
1973	Jackson turns 14—and is already a millionaire.
1978	Jackson acts as the Scarecrow in the film <i>The Wiz</i> . (Diana Ross acts as Dorothy in the same film, the first filmic intertext between the two stars.)
1979	Jackson is regarded as a mature singer for the first time when he releases the single 'Don't Stop Till You get Enough', which reaches No. 1 in the USA. His album <i>Off the Wall</i> sells more than 10 million copies.
1980	At the American Music Awards, Jackson wins awards for Favorite R&B album, Favorite Single and Favorite R&B Male Artist.
1982	Jackson's album <i>Thriller</i> sells over 40 million copies and becomes No. 1 in every major record-buying country in the world, providing Jackson's seventh US Top 10 single. He wins eight Grammy Awards. Singles taken from the album that become independently successful include 'The Girl is Mine', 'Thriller', 'Billie Jean' (dealing with issues of gender) and 'Beat It' (dealing with issues of race). Jackson becomes the first African-American performer to gain major airplay on the MTV channel, with the video clip for 'Billie Jean'.
1984	Jackson wins a record seven awards in the American Music Awards. Jackson's hair catches fire while shooting a commercial for Pepsi Cola. Because he receives second-degree burns, he requires plastic surgery

(continued)

TABLE 11.1 The celebrity of Michael Jackson (*continued*)

1985	Jackson appears as a superhero on the compilation album <i>We Are the World</i> , which was recorded to raise money for a worldwide charity.
August 1985	Jackson outbids Paul McCartney and Yoko Ono to buy the ATV music publishing catalogue for US\$47.5 million, which gives him the rights to more than 250 Beatles songs. Jackson is now seen as a major businessman. He secures a \$5 million sponsorship deal with Pepsi Cola, although, because of his religion, he cannot drink it.
1986	Jackson makes <i>Captain EO</i> , a 15-minute Disneyland film (continuing the discourse of 'Jackson as hero'). This month also marks the first appearance of the infamous <i>National Enquirer</i> picture of Jackson; he apparently sleeps every night in the oxygen tank.
1987	Jackson's <i>Bad</i> album goes directly to No. 1 on the US albums chart. Newspapers feature reports that Jackson has offered \$50,000 to \$100,000 to buy the remains of the Elephant Man from London Hospital; this episode is later parodied in his 'Leave Me Alone' video clip.
1988	Jackson acquires a ranch in Santa Ynez Valley, California, which is converted into the Neverland ranch. Newspapers make claims that Jackson has undergone large amounts of plastic surgery in order to look white. By the end of the 1980s Jackson has sold more records than any performer alive.
1994	Although newspapers constantly insist that Jackson's sexual orientation may be homosexual, he marries Lisa-Marie Presley. This heterosexual image of marriage is undercut by a very awkward 45-second kiss at the MTV Music Awards.
1995–2005	Allegations of child sexual abuse, marriages, rumours of surgeries, the mysteries of Neverland ranch, the birth of his children and subsequent commercial failures and antics (most significantly, holding his youngest child over a balcony) are repeatedly reported by the press as bizarre, and destabilise his celebrity image.
June 2009	While preparing for his comeback concert series, Jackson dies from cardiac arrest. As did Princess Diana before him, Jackson's death led to a very public and widespread outpouring of grief, with reportedly as many as one billion people tuning in to watch his funeral on television.
March 2010	Sony Music Entertainment signs a reported US\$250 million deal with Jackson's estate to retain until 2017 distribution rights to his recordings and release seven posthumous albums.

Up to 1994, we can see that Jackson's intertexts often worked against each other, creating a tension in his celebrity image. These tensions became more pronounced in the decade following 1994. Ironically, it was in death that Michael Jackson very much became the king of pop and the king of popular culture. For his death confirmed that it is the image that is most important for the celebrity to function, because Jackson's death removed the problematic man beset by rumours and scandal, and left his audience with the image of a driven, talented and tragic artist, dancer and performer. Brand Asset Consulting's quarterly survey of more than 16,000 Americans found that after his death, Jackson's relevance had increased by 125 per cent and his esteem by 32 per cent. Like Princess Diana and Marilyn Monroe before him, Jackson's death rewrote some aspects of his life and points most powerfully to the difference between a star and a celebrity, something we will return to again below.

The example of Michael Jackson also illustrates how important it is to maintain control over an image; otherwise, the metanarrative starts to fall apart. This might suggest that a celebrity image can only function when public and private lives are in relative harmony. Small tensions (a drug habit,

bad marriage or wild lifestyle) can be tolerated, and may actually deepen and develop a celebrity image, but where the intertexts work against each other, as in the case of Arnold Schwarzenegger's infidelities and Charlie Sheen's increasingly bizarre behaviour, the overall representation of the celebrity—the metanarrative and the image as a whole—starts to fall apart. We can no longer feel as though we know the celebrity; the familiar part of the familiar stranger becomes lost. The person might maintain a celebrity status, but it will function at a different level on the hierarchy of celebrity (discussed below). Consider the case of American comedian Bill Cosby. Widely regarded as a trailblazer in breaking down stereotypes around African-Americans (through television series like *The Cosby Show* and *Fat Albert*) and a beloved stand-up comedian in his own right, persistent rape allegations have broken his metanarrative (as an educated man, father and gentle comedian) to such a point that his series have been taken out of syndication, his comedy specials and tours have been cancelled, and he has been widely condemned in the news media and ridiculed by fellow comedians.

Celebrities, then, exist at the intersection of different media industries. In so doing, they come to function as industries in themselves. They are simultaneously a commodity—in that they can be analysed as another cultural good, another media text and another representation—and an industry that produces that commodity. Celebrity can, in effect, become self-sustaining and this seems to be the ultimate goal of a celebrity.

Madonna



While initially regarded as a chameleon because of the rapid changes in style in video clips such as 'Material Girl', 'Like a Virgin', 'Cherish' and 'Vogue', Madonna has taken control of her celebrity image to reconstruct herself as Madonna-as-musician, embodying that feminist ideal of a woman able to make it in a man's world on her own terms. When the video clip for 'Justify My Love' was released, despite it being little more than a form of sexual exploitation, it was widely hailed as a blow in favour of cultural freedom and feminism.

Of all her intertexts, the 1991 documentary film *Truth or Dare (In Bed with Madonna)*, showing backstage footage of Madonna preparing for a rigorous concert tour, perhaps did the most to exploit and develop her image as sexually alluring and honest. But even Madonna's bad films serve as intertexts, in the sense that they suggest she is authentic ('If Madonna can't act, this must be *her*') or that she cannot be restrained ('She is mutable and therefore cannot be limited to just one role').

A HIERARCHY OF CELEBRITIES

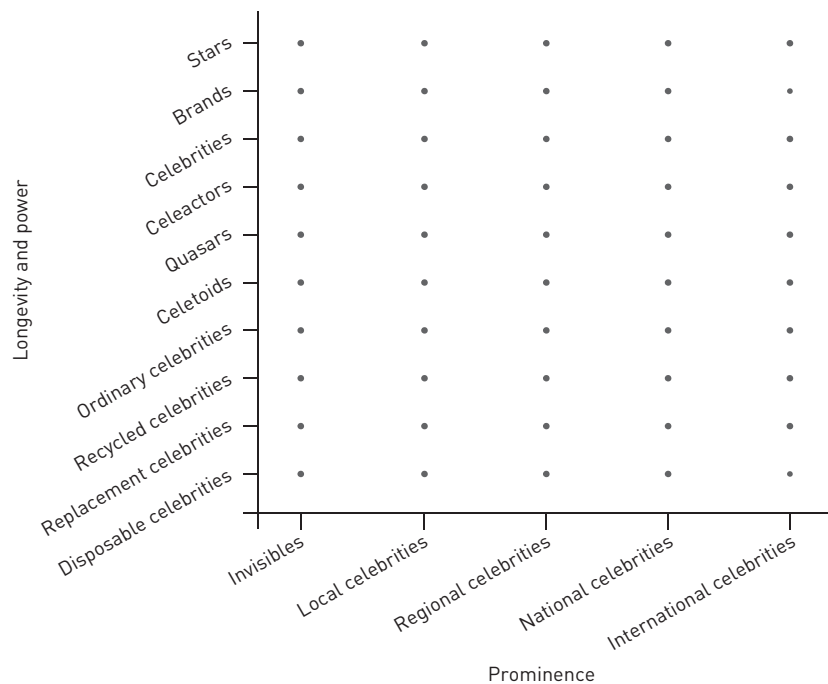
It is possible to map a hierarchy of celebrity based on fame. Increasingly, celebrities seem to be interested in deepening their celebrity or otherwise extending and developing it. Actors choose meatier roles; athletes become commentators, YouTube sensations make the jump to concert tours and reality television stars write tell-all books and magazine columns.

In mapping this hierarchy of celebrity, the three important factors are prominence, power and longevity. A celebrity seeks to be prominent in the public sphere. Similarly, a celebrity seeks to gain

control over his or her own image; that is, to gain power to develop, deepen and enrich that image. This enables them to become, in effect, the industry responsible for the creation of their image, and to be in control of their own mode of production. Allied to this is the drive to maintain celebrity, or to increase the longevity of their image. Of course, celebrities aim to make a considerable amount of money, but in terms of celebrity, it is long-lasting fame, born and developed as a result of control, that ultimately seems most important.

If we imagine celebrity as a graph, we can plot a hierarchy of celebrity across two axes, as depicted in Figure 11.1.

FIGURE 11.1 Hierarchy of celebrity



The x axis maps the prominence of the celebrity in the public sphere, which is similar to the way a media text achieves significance, as outlined in Chapter 10. Rein and colleagues (2006: 94) suggest a hierarchy of prominence rising from invisibles to local celebrities, regional celebrities, national celebrities and finally, international celebrities. Local celebrities, for example, are ‘somewhat well known in their own geographical areas ... In the past, most local celebrities did not seek visibility, they acquired it as a by-product of their occupations or lifestyles’ (Rein et al. 2006: 94–5). Local newsreaders or politicians or people working in local radio or on community access television could all be examples of local celebrities.

In order to move along this axis, a celebrity will need to develop an increasing number of intertexts, thereby increasing their significance and prominence in the public sphere.

The y axis maps the longevity and power of the celebrity, using the subsets discussed in more detail below.

THE COUNTERFEIT PEOPLE

Daniel Boorstin (1961: 57) famously referred to celebrities as ‘the counterfeit people’ who are ‘famous for being famous’. Putting any pejorative connotations to one side, the term seems to be an apt way of describing the way celebrities, and particularly celebrity images, can accommodate a wide variety of behaviours. Counterfeit people can move between multiple roles; for example, from actor or musician to politician (Ronald Reagan, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Peter Garrett), actor to activist (Sean Penn and Audrey Hepburn), company executive to media personality (Donald Trump, Richard Branson and, briefly the reverse in Eddie McGuire’s case) or journalist to friend (the *Sunrise* team and US newsreader Katie Couric). Part of the skill of being a celebrity appears to be being able to deepen, widen or otherwise develop the celebrity image so a person can move successfully between these roles and thus prolong their celebrity.

Stars

Richard Dyer’s *Stars* (1979) was one of the first texts to consider celebrities in the context of film stars. Stars exist at the very top of the celebrity hierarchy (and increasingly, as noted above, these are *music* stars) because of their earning power through music sales or concert appearances, or, in the case of film stars, their record box office receipts and/or fees per film. More importantly, they’re at the top due to the longevity of their careers, their ability to have a great deal of agency (control) over their careers and their tendency to be supported by a wide range of intertexts, such as gossip magazines and entertainment shows. They are the apex of the aspirational celebrity hierarchy because they are self-sustaining, able to produce and reproduce their own star image themselves (think, for example, of Oprah Winfrey or Madonna).

A **star** refers to any of a range of celebrities exhibiting these features, whether they are based in film, television, radio or music. A star tends to be linked to a particular industry (a film star, a pop star or a television star), whereas celebrities can be more transient and thereby can exist without a clear institutional affiliation.

But the most significant part of being a star, as Michael Jackson demonstrates, is that like the celestial bodies to which the term refers, their images often persist after the actual person has died. Marilyn Monroe, Elvis Presley, James Dean, Humphrey Bogart and scores of others have maintained celebrity power and continue to make money though they are long gone and all we are left with is their image. This, then, seems to be the true test of star power—the ability to exist as a celebrity, to be self-perpetuating, even after the actual person has passed away. We would suggest that in the future, as celebrities continue to proliferate, this may be what the term ‘star’ is reserved for.

WHEN DOES A CELEBRITY BECOME A STAR?

If it isn’t death that makes a celebrity a star, then when does it occur? Media writers frequently refer to a star-making moment: a particular film, album or television series that enables the transition from being just another celebrity to becoming a star capable of exercising control over a career and attaining some sort of longevity (and greater sums of money). Judging this moment can be a subjective determination, but star-making moments could include Samuel L. Jackson’s performance in *Pulp Fiction* and Daniel Craig’s starring role in *Layer Cake*, which gained him the role of the new James Bond in *Casino Royale*.



#Star: A celebrity who commands prominence, longevity and power in his or her particular field.



But once again, we would argue that true stardom can only be confirmed once the real person passes away. If the image alone is self-perpetuating (generating an income stream and maintaining a fan base) without the living individual, then this is the *real* star-making moment. By way of example, the passing of Leonard Nimoy (*Star Trek*'s Mister Spock) in 2015 operated as a star-making moment for him. His image continues to circulate throughout the mediasphere on licensed products (generating an income). People across the world (and in the case of the International Space Station, above it) celebrated his life by making the Vulcan salute hand gesture and posting pictures and memes online (maintaining a fan base). Virtual avatars even gathered in *Star Trek Online* (a MMO game) to mourn his passing; in-game virtual statues have been erected on Vulcan and New Romulus as memorials to him (maintaining a fan base). Most items associated with Leonard Nimoy continue to rise in value on eBay and more continue to be released (generating an income). President Barack Obama paid tribute to Nimoy when he said: 'Long before being nerdy was cool, there was Leonard Nimoy' (maintaining a fan base).

It is our argument that this was when Leonard Nimoy truly moved from being a celebrity to being a star and, as morbid as it sounds, it would be our argument that more generally it is death that acts as the true star-making moment (tested by the duration of the celebrity image over the weeks, the months and the years that follow).

Brands

One of the ways celebrities can become self-perpetuating and thus make the transition to star is by becoming a **brand**: someone whose name and/or likeness can be used to sell and/or represent certain goods. Brands seem to exist in this nebulous zone between celebrities and stars. Celebrities such as Martha Stewart (through the Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia), Jamie Oliver and Elle Macpherson experience longevity through merchandising, but often seem to fall short of real stardom. An example is former heavyweight boxer George Foreman, who has maintained a kind of celebrity through his George Foreman Grill. Once again, a brand raises the possibility of the celebrity image persisting after death; the director Alfred Hitchcock, himself a former advertising man, reconstructed himself as a brand for his films, television and even books so successfully that 'Hitchcockian' now exists as an adjective to describe film styles and themes similar to his own body of work.

Athletes and models, whose celebrity is tied to a necessary expiry date—how long they can keep performing at a peak physical level—often seek to make the transition to being a brand; Air Jordan (or Jordan) shoes continue to be produced by Nike, even though their namesake, former professional NBA basketball player Michael Jordan, retired from the NBA in 2003. Indeed, they are now sold by the Jordan Brand, a subsidiary of Nike.

More particularly, we could argue that artists like Walt Disney and Jim Henson became self-perpetuating by becoming brand names—the Walt Disney Company and the Jim Henson Company, respectively. Their names still appear on products generated from those companies (like Disney's *Big Hero 6* and *Jim Henson's Creature Shop Challenge*) and, as mark of how well known both men's images have become, it is increasingly hard to think of animation without thinking of Disney or puppetry without thinking of Henson.

Brand: A name, person, sign, character, colour, font, slogan, catch-phrase or any combination of these that operates as the signifier of a particular product, service or business. A legally protected brand called a trademark. A brand is a perfect example of metonymy and an aspiration for many celebrities.

OPRAH'S AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE

The 2010 visit to Australia by Oprah Winfrey is a local example of the power of the celebrity brand. A six-month campaign by Tourism Australia (costing an estimated \$150 million, including associated advertising), wooed the talk-show host to Australia in December 2010 to record four episodes, in which she extolled her love of Australia to audiences in over 150 countries. While its net effect is only being quantified now, everyone concerned agreed that it was money well spent.

Celebrities

As we have seen above, celebrities are 'familiar strangers' (Gitlin 1980). To be a familiar stranger implies that the celebrity has both a public (familiar) and a private (strange) life: the audience desires to know more about the celebrity's private life—the 'real' or 'authentic' person. Of course, the irony is that this can never be achieved, for as soon as the private becomes public it becomes mediated, and thus part of the celebrity image. There are many types of celebrity, and sitting just under brands are those celebrities who have maintained some level of prominence, longevity and power.

CELEBRITY ACTIVISM

One of the most common forms of celebrity branding is that of events and causes: celebrity activism. Angelina Jolie and Nicole Kidman are both ambassadors for the United Nations. Bono talks to politicians about the environment. Even celebrity magazine *Vanity Fair* ran concurrent issues on two celebrity causes: the environment and Africa. This can be a very productive use of celebrity, using a profile to draw attention to causes that may not otherwise be on the agenda. But celebrity activism can also be cynically motivated, so that a celebrity increases their exposure by becoming attached to a hot issue.

Types of celebrities

Celebrities can and do appear in every field, not just in the film, television and music industries. J.K. Rowling (writer), Stephen King (writer), Howard Stern (broadcaster), Barack Obama (politician), Simon Schama (academic), Tiger Woods (sportsman) and Naomi Campbell (supermodel) are all celebrities in their respective fields; they have all become familiar strangers, with their audiences becoming interested in both their public and private lives. Other examples include public figures (the British royal family), commentators (Bruce McAvaney), photographers (Annie Leibowitz), newsreaders (Peter Hitchener), current affairs presenters (George Negus), editors (Anna Wintour), media creators (J.J. Abrams and Joss Whedon) and newspaper columnists (Phillip Adams and Andrew Bolt), to name just a few. Of course, as also noted earlier, these celebrities can also move between media industries, as demonstrated by Hamish and Andy moving between television and radio, or Will Smith moving between music and film.

ARE HEROES CELEBRITIES?

Daniel Boorstin (1961) clearly differentiates heroes from celebrities in terms of achievement: heroes are famous for doing something (heroic), while celebrities are famous just for being famous. This is not always true, but it does demonstrate how celebrities and heroes can be differently thought of. James Monaco, for example, similarly defines heroes as famous people who have actually, actively

done something. But while heroes can also be celebrities (as they become familiar strangers), it is relatively rare for a celebrity to become a hero. Exceptions include victims of great tragedy or record-breaking sporting figures (who are also referred to as 'legends'). Steve Irwin, the late crocodile hunter, for example, was clearly a celebrity in life, but has been referred to as a hero since his death, because of his work for the environment.

Familiar strangers, whose private and public lives are equally interesting, can include criminals, victims of crime and people involved in the criminal justice system, such as lawyers and police. As demonstrated by both Jesse James and Ned Kelly, criminals have long been considered celebrities. In Australia, 'Chopper' Read, who had spent much of his life in jail, made himself into a celebrity through his books and the film based on his life. People whose lives were featured in the *Underbelly* series, such as Mick Gatto, similarly attracted a degree of celebrity following the success of that television series, slipping between infamous celebrities and quasars (discussed below). Italian-American gangster Al Capone is another example of an infamous celebrity with some longevity and prominence in the mediasphere.

Of course, just as celebrities can move between media industries they can also move between being famous and being infamous, while still remaining celebrities. Australian artist and musician Rolf Harris is one example. Convicted of indecent assault and stripped of many of the honours he had been awarded over his long career, Harris remains 'the familiar stranger', but rather than being remembered for singing 'Jake the Peg' or painting a portrait of the Queen, he is now remembered more in connection to his crimes and how he remained undiscovered for so long. He is an infamous, rather than famous, celebrity.

Celeactors

Some fictional characters have a private and public life, which often exist quite independently of their creators. Examples of **celeactors** include Dame Edna Everage, Ali G, Borat, Norman Gunston and Alan Partridge. Frequently, they interact with real people who may be unaware that they are in fact fictional constructs, and they may move between different texts. Dame Edna Everage, for example, played a character on the American television series *Ally McBeal*. It also means that the creators of such characters (Barry Humphries, Sascha Baron Cohen, Garry McDonald and Steve Coogan, respectively) can have separate careers and celebrity images quite apart from their creations.

WHY CAN'T ALL FICTIONAL CHARACTERS BE CELEBRITIES?

Characters such as Homer and Marge Simpson, Kermit the Frog and Mickey Mouse simply don't have the private life that the familiar stranger requires; that is they can only exist within purely fictional constructs, even where a private life is simulated, as when Marge posed for *Playboy* or Kermit gives an interview. Unlike celeactors, they rarely appear outside their own television series or films, and in most instances cannot directly interact with the real world. But this could change in the future with the advent of new technologies.

Celeactor: A fictional character who has a private and public life, and exists independently of his or her creator; for example, Dame Edna Everage.



Quasars

A **quasar** is James Monaco's term for a celebrity whose fame usually only lasts for the duration of an event. Quasars can include reality television stars, lawyers on a case that gains media coverage, victims of a crime, and some criminals (who only become known because of their association with an event) (see also 'Disposable celebrities' below). It is at this level of 'quasar' on the celebrity hierarchy that individuals lose virtually all control over their own image. They're so transient in nature, there's no point in naming any here—they've already slipped from the public consciousness.

#Quasar: A shooting star; a celebrity whose popularity remains only for the duration of a major event. The term is scientifically inaccurate, as a quasar is not a shooting star (transitory) but a 'quasi-astronomical object': a mysterious far-off object that might be a star, or perhaps a mini-galaxy in violent turmoil.

Celetoids

Celetoid is Chris Rojek's (2001) term for a type of celebrity specifically designed to be a celebrity. Often we are made aware of the celetoid's construction; for example, the Spice Girls, bands featured on *Popstars* or the winners of *Pop*, *American Idol* or *Australian Idol*, *X Factor* or *America/Britain/Australia's Got Talent*. Celetoids are very much the products of reality television. Unlike quasars, some may not even retain their celebrity for the duration of the event they were created for. Susan Boyle (from *Britain's Got Talent*) would be a celetoid in that her unlikely life story, appearance and discovery (her 'construction') remain significant elements in her celebrity. Similarly, perhaps the most significant celetoids currently operating in the mediasphere, One Direction, foreground their construction (as a group by Simon Cowell) in virtually all the media that they do (even as that group shrinks in number).

#Celetoid: A celebrity created to fill a gap in an industry, or for some specified purpose [such as reality show winners].

Ordinary celebrities

Ordinary celebrities arise from lifestyle and reality television series that appeal to audiences because of their authenticity—chefs such as Curtis Stone, tradesmen like Scott Cam or gardeners such as Jamie Durie. Such people appear to be so authentic that members of the audience feel as though they know them. However, as Frances Bonner (2003) points out, this 'ordinariness' is itself another performance—that of being ordinary. A more recent example of ordinary celebrities is the spate of celebrities coming out of YouTube: ordinary people caught doing silly or amazing things. As Justin Bieber, who first came to fame as a YouTube sensation, demonstrates, it is always possible for ordinary celebrities to move up the hierarchy and become celebrities in their own right.

Recycled celebrities

Some people maintain their celebrity through cameo or guest appearances in other media or in game and reality television series. Originally, it used to be on shows such as *The Love Boat* (who remembers Charo?), but now it is in reality television and often talent show series, such as *Dancing with the Stars*, *I'm A Celebrity*, *Get Me Out Of Here!* and *Hollywood Squares*. Again, unlike quasars, recycled celebrities barely last for the duration of the event as they are often only providing a guest appearance or are voted off the program before it concludes.

Replacement celebrities

Replacement celebrities are a sub-set of celetoids groomed to replace one currently in existence, often referred to as the next so-and-so or the next big thing. Replacement celebrities occur in a

variety of industries, often on talent series or reality television. The annual winners of *X Factor*, *MasterChef*, *The Block* or *Australian Idol* could fall into this category. Again, the best replacement celebrities can hope for is to become quasars and retain their celebrity for the duration of the event they were groomed for.

Disposable celebrities

At the very bottom of the hierarchy we find David Chalke's (2005) notion of the **disposable celebrity**. This describes the virtual production line of celebrities produced by reality television series. Exposure makes them celebrities (however briefly). The end of their exposure usually equates to the end of their celebrity—when they are disposed of. These are not the winners (they are often celestoids or their replacement celebrities) but rather all of the other contestants who emerge from reality television series such as *Big Brother*, *Survivor* or *Australian Idol*, which run season after season. They are manufactured with a built-in expiry date—to release X number of singles or make X number of nightclub and shopping centre appearances—before they are disposed of and replaced by the next wave of disposable celebrities from the new season of the program. To maintain their celebrity, disposable celebrities must develop their celebrity—assert control over their image in some way—before their obsolescence date, otherwise their celebrity will end with the commencement of the next season of the show. This means that the best most of them can hope for is to be a quasar—to maintain their celebrity for that season. Some also try to prolong their celebrity by becoming a recycled celebrity on another reality television program. But as Ryan 'Fitzzy' Fitzgerald and Chrissie Swann (former *Big Brother* evictees rather than winners) prove, it is still possible to move up the celebrity hierarchy to become media commentators in their own right.

Disposable celebrity:
celebrity manufactured
a production line in
der to be replaced in the
ar future by the next
isposable celebrity.

HOW CAN WE ANALYSE CELEBRITIES?

As we have seen above, the celebrity is a textual construct, a commodity and an industry. Celebrity can therefore be analysed as:

- another media text (through textual analysis; see Chapter 9 and Tools 3)
- an industry in its own right (through notions of public relations; see Chapter 8)
- a particular type of commodity designed to sell products and ideas, market films and other media texts, brand events and protests, and provide endorsements.

WHY ARE CELEBRITIES IMPORTANT?

While celebrities may seem incredibly superficial and undeserving of too much attention, they are culturally significant for several reasons:

- *They offer their audiences a wide variety of identities and different ways of being.* The celebrity can be understood as a condensation of values, either at a particular time (for example, Marilyn Monroe and American values during the 1950s) or in order to challenge existing identities

(which is one of the arguments for the appeal of Kim Kardashian or Lady Gaga). This means celebrities can be both inspirational ('I want to be like that person') and aspirational ('I want to be that person').

- *The celebrity shows an ability to function as a counterfeit person.* This enables them to move between different roles, which reflects a perceived need in audiences to transform, remould and recreate themselves. This is perhaps best embodied by the actor Hugh Laurie who was best known as a British comedian (on *Blackadder*), then became a dramatic American actor (as the titular character on *House*) and more recently as a blues musician backed by the Copper Bottom Band. Such a desire to remake oneself is mirrored in other aspects of today's society, such as therapy groups, plastic surgery and job-changing, and it is an element of postmodernity that we will return to in Chapter 20.
- *The celebrity indicates a shift in the mediasphere as a whole, from the dissemination of information towards the dissemination of identities.* This can be viewed as a negative—a move 'towards a culture that privileges the momentary, the visual and the sensational over the enduring, the written, the rational' (Turner 2004: 4). It also can be viewed as a positive—a move towards a more democratised culture in which different identities are constantly on display, offering potential choices to everybody in society.

IS CELEBRITY A NEGATIVE ASPECT OF SOCIETY?

If you described a journalist or newsreader as a celebrity, it could be interpreted in one of two ways. Either the person has done very well and become very well known (positively) or the person lacks credibility and is more concerned with image than with information (negatively). But are the traits of celebrity really negative? If we take Rojek's (2001) idea of parasocial relationships, outlined earlier in this chapter, we can see that these are potentially advantageous to the journalist or newsreader, because celebrity enables the person to form a link with their audience. Such skills helped to make Katie Couric a success in the USA and the *Sunrise* team so successful in Australia. Is celebrity really such a bad thing then?



SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Celebrities have existed since Roman times, though the available technology determined their sphere of influence—from statues and coins, to advertising, monographs and volumes, to photography and film.
- In the 20th century, celebrities began to claim social and financial power for themselves.
- The celebrity is best described as the familiar stranger, a definition that acknowledges both the parasocial relationship created by the celebrity (familiarity) and the fact that a celebrity is a highly constructed image (therefore the real person always remains a stranger).
- Part of the appeal of the celebrity for audiences is in trying to close this gap: to know the unknowable. In many cases it is analogous to a religious experience.
- A celebrity is someone:
 - who emerges from a certain industry or otherwise attracts public attention
 - who is made highly visible through the media.
 - whose private life often attracts greater public interest than their professional life.
 - who develops and promulgates a persona, aura or image.
- Fans of particular celebrities will gather information, opinions, views and images of the celebrity to get to know them better.
- As a result the celebrity is an intertextual construction: a balance of the public and the private.
- If these are out of alignment, as with Lindsay Lohan or Bill Cosby, the celebrity may slip down the hierarchy of fame, though not all increases in the private element of the celebrity's fame appears to be a problem (think, for example, of Paris Hilton).
- The hierarchy of celebrity is based on three important factors: prominence, power and longevity.
- In terms of prominence, celebrities can be invisible, local, regional, national or international.
- In terms of longevity and power, they can be categorised as stars, brands, celebrities, celeactors, quasars, celetoids, ordinary celebrities, recycled celebrities, replacement celebrities and disposable celebrities.
- Celebrities are important because they offer their audiences a wide variety of identities and different ways of being; they show an ability to function as a counterfeit person; and they indicate a shift in the mediasphere as a whole, from the dissemination of information towards the dissemination of identities.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is a celebrity?
- 2 Explain the idea of a 'parasocial relationship'.
- 3 How has the concept of celebrity changed over time?

- 4 Map several celebrities you are familiar with across the celebrity hierarchy. How and why have they moved up and down the levels of the hierarchy?
- 5 Do you think celebrities are important? Do you want to be a celebrity? Why or why not?

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CASE STUDY 3

Journalism, Gender and the Media: What Misogyny Looks Like in the 21st Century

Nicola Goc

Introduction

One of the luxuries of being a member of the dominant group is that the benefits often remain invisible; they are naturalised so that people are not always aware of the ingrained inequality. This blindness allows many men, for example, to remain unaware of what the majority of the world's population—women—experience on a daily basis: gender discrimination. Male privilege means that males automatically receive a set of unearned advantages that females, given the same social circumstances, do not. Male privilege manifests in both overt and subtle ways. While both male and female journalists endure personal abuse and death threats for doing their job, for female journalists the situation is far worse and the abuse most often sexually explicit. A 2011 study by the International Women's Media Foundation found that women occupy just 10 per cent of senior management roles in Australian newsrooms, and sexual harassment is increasing and female journalists experience sexual harassment at a rate more than twice that of the general workforce (Byerly 2011). This harassment occurs both within and outside the newsroom. Every journalist understands that criticism is part and parcel of the privilege of working in the media, but female journalists and media workers are being criticised not for their work but for their gender. The comments both from inside and outside the profession are more about how they look and what they wear than what they report. And for those who report in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as sport, technology, and gaming, they are having a particularly hard time in the digital age.

This case study looks at sexism and misogyny in journalism and the media today, focusing on sports and gaming journalism. Be warned that this case study includes strong language and offensive content. All of this content is freely available in the public domain.

The double-edged sword of anonymity

With the arrival in the 1990s of the World Wide Web, the new digital realm was seen as a genuine opportunity for women to participate on equal terms in the world of global communication. The internet has empowered women and minority groups to have a voice and speak back against inequality. Laura Bates's Everyday Sexism Project, a website set up to encourage women and girls to share their experiences of sexism, is one example of how women have used the very technology which is at times impacting on them in such a negative way to fight back against sexism and misogyny in all aspects of their lives. The internet's global reach and relative affordability and accessibility make it a communication platform where humans can do great good and also great harm. The internet is a place of binary oppositions. It is a place where free speech flourishes and where whistleblowers and the oppressed have a global voice; it is a place where individuals with little money can create and communicate as never before in human history. It allows any of us to speak out against oppression, wrongdoing and inequality and also to have fun, to share our joy and creativity and to enrich our lives and the lives of others by communicating with strangers and friends around the world. And we can do all this anonymously if we choose.



That anonymity also allows any of us to harass, abuse and threaten others with a high level of impunity. Note that throughout this case study, the spelling of offensive terms drawn from original quotes has been modified.

‘Shut the fk up Caroline Wilson!’**

In 2009, a community Facebook page was set up to sexually harass one of Australia’s most experienced sports journalists, senior *Age* football writer Caroline Wilson. Under the guise of satire, this anonymously administered page is dedicated to promoting sexually violent comments against Wilson. The ‘About’ for this page states: ‘This is a satirical page. It is dedicated to those who have had enough of the tirade of bullshit spewing forth from Australia’s worst football reporter.’ As at March 2015, some 1690 people have ‘liked’ the page and posted mostly anonymous, negative and often violent and sexually explicit comments. The example that follows is by no means the most extreme: ‘She’s back for another year and menstruating like a banshee because no one gives a flying f**k about the withered old mole. Looks like Bruce doulls [sic] nut sack’. She is regularly referred to as a ‘media whore’, ‘old nag’ and ‘c**t’. This is not the only Facebook page dedicated to publicly vilifying and sexually harassing Caroline Wilson. Another page, ‘Sack Caroline Wilson’, refers to Wilson as a ‘pig’ with posts about how it is impossible to ‘make her shut the f**k up short of a bullet’; ‘Mind blowing that this witch has a husband, poor bloke must have an intellectual disability’; ‘F**king die u horrible Slut!!’.

While the sexual abuse and ridicule against Caroline Wilson is most pervasive in the digital space, it is not restricted to the online world. In 2008, on an episode of Nine Network’s *AFL Footy Show*, presenter Sam Newman groped a mannequin dressed in lingerie that had a photograph of Caroline Wilson stapled to its head. A year after this offensive and sexist ‘sketch’ went to air, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) finally made a ruling that Newman’s actions breached the television

industry’s code of conduct because it was ‘likely to provoke severe ridicule’ (ACMA 2009). At the time ACMA found: ‘The broadcast was likely, in all the circumstances, to have provoked severe ridicule against the journalist on the grounds of gender’ and that Nine ‘breached the *Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice 2004* by broadcasting a program which was likely to provoke severe ridicule, as well as failure to provide a substantive written response to the complainants’ (ACMA 2009). Nine provided a private apology to Wilson, withdrew Newman for a number of episodes to undergo ‘professional anti-discrimination training’ and broadcast an apology on its news bulletin prior to his return. But Newman was back on air with a new \$3 million contract within weeks, his career seemingly unscathed.

Wilson is one of the most experienced sports journalists in Australia. She has been covering AFL since the 1980s and was the first woman to be appointed to write on Australian football full time by a major newspaper. The AFL Media Association has named Caroline Wilson three times as Australia’s most outstanding football and feature writer. She is a multiple Walkley Award-winning journalist who is hard-hitting and well known for her investigative work, particularly in recent times on the Essendon drugs scandal. In one article, Wilson incorrectly reported that James Hird had been sacked as coach of Essendon. Journalists working to publish exclusives in a competitive market rely heavily on the accuracy of their sources. Sometimes their judgment in trusting a source is wrong and at times a source unwittingly passes on incorrect and inaccurate information. This appears to be the case in this instance and Wilson has publicly acknowledged that she got it wrong. This inaccurate report saw her detractors increase their abusive sexist rants rather than rightfully and respectfully challenge her journalism. Journalists make mistakes; they sometimes get their reports wrong—and they pay a very public price for those mistakes. All journalists are acutely aware of the impact errors and misreporting have on their credibility and their careers.



I have a particular interest in this issue as a decade earlier I was one of the first female journalists to report on Australian rules football for a capital city daily. While my editor received a few critical letters, and there was some sexual banter in the press box and in club change rooms, and even sexual harassment (from a press photographer), none of the criticism and sexual harassment was violent or threatening—and I always knew who the perpetrator was. Why are female sports journalists in the 21st century being subjected to such levels of abuse and vilification?

A-League football reporter, SBS World News presenter and match-day host of the 2014 World Cup coverage in Australia, Lucy Zelic, says social media has a lot to account for in the overt and abundant sexism female sports journalists encounter today:

The beauty and beast that is social media witnesses some of the most atrocious attacks on women in sports media played out across public platforms. In my role, I am subjected to comments about my appearance, cop criticism suggesting that I 'know nothing about football' and that I am 'riding on the coattails of my brother's success'.

Despite holding a journalism degree and major in sports business, plus the years of accumulated sports knowledge I have under my belt, I am still regarded as 'the woman' to some fans of the game. (Zelic 2014)

Female journalists in all areas of the media are subjected to extreme sexual abuse and at levels never experienced by their male counterparts. In 2012, columnist for the UK's *Independent* newspaper, Laurie Penny, wrote about the misogynist harassment she suffers daily in the online workplace. She said that women having an opinion is the 'mini-skirt' of the internet: 'Having one and flaunting it is somehow asking an amorphous mass of almost entirely male keyboard-bashers to tell you how they'd like

to rape, kill and urinate on you' (Penny 2011). Part of her everyday practice as a female journalist is checking her email, Twitter and Facebook accounts every morning. When she participates in this routine she also has to sift through threats of violence, public speculations about her sexual preference and the 'odour and capacity of my genitals, and attempts to write off challenging ideas with the declaration that, since I and my friends are so very unattractive, anything we have to say must be irrelevant' (Penny 2011).

Digital Media Fellow at the Poynter Institute, Jeff Sonderman, acknowledges that while all journalists—men and women—share struggles against name-calling, personal attacks and general trollishness in any online forum, women 'too often face an additional layer of spite, insult and objectification' and 'the social environment seems particularly charged for women covering issues where men feel superior [sports] or emotions run high [politics]' (Sonderman 2011).

Visual misogyny

All of the women in this case study have been subjected to 'visual misogyny' (Sarkeesian 2012). According to cultural critic, feminist scholar and journalist Anita Sarkeesian, a favourite harassment tactic is borrowed from mainstream pornography and includes 'adding images of ejaculating semen on a woman's face' (Sarkeesian 2012). She has been subjected to 'rape drawings'; that is, pornographic drawings that are used as 'weapons to make sure their threats of sexual assault are clear'. Rape drawings featuring her likeness are regularly spammed to her email account, posted to her Facebook page and sent through other social media such as Twitter and YouTube. One image depicts a woman drawn to resemble Sarkeesian who is tied up with a Wii controller shoved in her mouth while being raped by Mario from behind. Another drawing Sarkeesian received via social media features a chained nude figure on her knees with five penises ejaculating on her face with the words 'f**k toy' written on her torso (Sarkeesian 2012).



Sarkeesian acknowledges the place of humorous Photoshop manipulation, cartoons and image macros as ‘a legitimate and important part of a healthy political discourse online, especially when used to challenge powerful institutions, leaders or regressive social norms’ (2012). But what she and other women endure is visual misogyny and textual abuse that in any other public forum would be outlawed.

Journalism and the internet

The internet gives journalists a reach never imagined in the age of traditional print-based and nation-based media, and for some high-profile journalists their individual sphere of influence is now global. Quite simply, the World Wide Web has transformed journalism. It has destroyed the old paper-based business model where advertising and circulation fuelled profits. What is evolving is a new form of journalism—participatory journalism—that facilitates a dynamic dialogue, a multi-level exchange of information and ideas between the journalist and the audience. It is destroying the old linear sender and receiver communications model and is enriching societies—but it is not without its problems.

Audiences now expect to have a dialogue with journalists and to have their own opinions published on global media platforms. Surely this is a good thing for journalism? It is, except for one thing: the lack of personal accountability on the internet enables people to anonymously post offensive and threatening comments and to make abusive threats to journalists they would never make face-to-face or in a public forum. And for female journalists, in particular, this means that in their workplace they are experiencing levels of abuse and harassment never before experienced by journalists. A 2014 study by the UK cross-party think tank Demos found that men receive more Twitter abuse than their female counterparts in every single profession—except for journalism. Around five per cent of the tweets a female journalist gets are abusive or derogatory. That is one in twenty, which is more than three times the number for male journalists, or for women in general (Bartlett et al. 2014).

Anita Sarkeesian: ‘Tropes vs Women in Video Games’

Anita Sarkeesian is a powerful example of the positive ways in which the internet connects people and offers opportunities. In 2009, Sarkeesian started her website Feminist Frequency with the intention of creating feminist media criticism accessible to the younger generation. In 2012, she sought donations through Kickstarter, the world’s largest funding platform for creative projects, to develop her webseries ‘Tropes vs Women in Video Games’ and was overwhelmed by the positive response. Supporters donated more than \$150,000 to the project—far beyond the \$6000 Sarkeesian had sought. Her success allowed her to produce her series on sexism in video games and made her an overnight celebrity. Her project was covered extensively in the news media around the world, elevating Sarkeesian to the centre of discussions about gaming and sexism.

But with that exposure came the downside—global online abuse. In July 2012, game developer Benjamin Daniel’s interactive domestic abuse style ‘game’, entitled *Beat Up Anita Sarkeesian*, was uploaded to the NewGrounds website. The game, Sarkeesian wrote on her website (Sarkeesian 2012):

invited players to ‘punch this bitch in the face’ and with each click a photoshopped image of me would become progressively more bloody and battered until the screen turned completely red. The ‘game’ was then proudly circulated on various gaming forums by those engaging in the sustained harassment campaign against me. It remained on NewGrounds website for about 24 hours before being removed.

But Sarkeesian has not been deterred. She continues to speak out, to create videos and to share her opinions and knowledge on social media, in news interviews and at public events. On 23 January 2015, through her blog Feminist Frequency, she announced she was producing two



new video series tackling the 'positive' portrayal of women in video games, as well as the 'portrayal of masculine entities in games' (Jenkins 2015).

Online gender divide

Nevertheless, for women who share their knowledge, expertise and opinions publicly, the risk of personal abuse online continues to create a gender divide in the online space. For women, as we have seen, the abuse is usually aimed at their gender and appearance, and is often aggressively sexual. Rape threats are common. Too much sexuality or not enough seem to be equally problematic: misogynistic trolls attack female journalists both as 'sluts' and as 'in need of a gag'. The majority of the trolls are men. This is, as journalist Louise Ridely writes, 'clearly, a sexism issue' (Ridley 2014). Being a female journalist and having knowledge and an opinion is a dangerous combination online. When journalist Jessica Misener wrote an article for *The Atlantic*, she was struck by how quickly the comments quickly devolved into a 'scathing bashing of the headshot of me that ran with my byline: "By the looks of you, you should be writing about Maroon 5 [an American pop rock band] instead", and predictable comments about how I was both a "feminazi" and a "cold bitch who just needs to get laid"' (La Rosa 2014).

A few years ago journalist Andrea Bartz and a female colleague began writing a weekly advice column for CNN.com's Tech page. Like every column on the site, theirs included a photo. After the first column went live, Bartz scrolled to the comments section, ready to respond to actual questions and content-based feedback. Instead, the column had 'elicited such insightful comments as "I'd lick my dick in that"; "I'd do the short one but not the tall one"; "Can you imagine waking up next to that freak?" and "he'd look better with longer hair"' (La Rosa 2014). Bartz says that the comments on her appearance and 'f**kability' generally outnumbered remarks on the piece itself: 'I clicked over to columns in the section penned by men and found that their commenters [while no less vicious] kept looks out

of their invective. Our editor was aghast. I was sick to my stomach' (La Rosa 2014).

UK columnist for the *Evening Standard*, Rosamund Urwin, has become used to online forum threads insulting her. She says: 'The comments are always personal. If you write anything about sexual violence you always get really unpleasant stuff.... You'll get people going, "Oh well, it's not a problem for you because no-one's going to rape you love", as though it's desirable to be raped. I've had that on Twitter, but often the troll doesn't copy you in, so you only find it if you ever look up your name. I don't know that that makes it any better' (Ridley 2014).

GamerGate

In August 2014, several women within the video game industry, including game developers Zoe Quinn and Brianna Wu, and cultural critic Anita Sarkeesian, were subjected to a sustained campaign of violent verbal misogynistic attacks under the twitter hashtag: #gamergate. The anonymous abuse, which included threats of rape and death, quickly spread to online forums reddit, 8chan and 4chan. GamerGate began when the former partner of Quinn, games developer Eron Gjoni, created a toxic blog dedicated to abusing Quinn about their failed personal relationship and creating lies about her success as a game developer. Gjoni made false claims that Quinn had traded sex for positive reviews from journalist Nathan Grayson (Grayson had never reviewed Quinn's games). Through the 4chan online forum Quinn became the victim of an abusive, violent campaign, which included the posting of nude pictures accompanied by death threats. Fellow developer Brianna Wu, after she made fun of the 'movement' on Twitter, was also driven from her home by GamerGate. Her home address was posted online, and her Twitter was flooded with such explicit threats as: 'I've got a K-bar and I'm coming to your house so I can shove it up your ugly feminist c**t'.

And it was not just female developers and gamers who were targeted by GamerGate. In October 2014, Anita



Sarkeesian was scheduled to give a speech at Utah State University related to her webseries 'Tropes vs Women in Video Games' when someone emailed the university threatening to commit, 'the deadliest school shooting in American history' (Sarkeesian 2014) if she was allowed to speak on campus. The unknown male threatened to write his manifesto in Sarkeesian's spilled blood, threatening 'you will all bear witness to what feminist lies and poison have done to the men of America' (Kolhatkar 2014).

When the university and Utah police refused to screen attendees for firearms, citing the state's concealed carry laws, Sarkeesian was forced to cancel the event (Sarkeesian 2014). The aim by individuals and groups to silence women who dare to have a public voice is nothing new, but it is shocking that it is so pervasive in liberal democracies in the 21st century.

Gamer and actor, Felicia Day, who appeared in the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Supernatural*, and rose to fame as the writer and lead of online gaming sitcom *The Guild*, said she did not initially comment on GamerGate due to fears of being 'doxxed' (having her personal information disseminated over the internet): 'I have tried to retweet a few of the articles I've seen dissecting the issue in support, but personally I am terrified to be doxxed for even typing the words "gamer gate". I have had stalkers and restraining orders issued in the past, I have had people show up on my doorstep when my personal information was hard to get' (Hern 2014).

Day eventually posted a comment supporting the female gamers and game developers, and within minutes of her post a commenter with the username 'gaimerg8' posted what they claimed was her address and personal email in the comment section below a post. At the same time, male critics posting comments online were almost untouched. This inequality in the responses, according to journalist Alex Hern, is shown in how former American football star Chris Kluwe was treated when he also criticised the group: "None of you f**king #gamergate tools tried to dox me, even after

I tore you a new one. I'm not even a tough target", Kluwe tweeted' (Hern 2014). The immediate doxxing received by Day underscores the differing treatment experienced by women and men who spoke out against GamerGate.

Misinformation about GamerGate was perpetuated by the mainstream news media who misrepresented the issue and minimised the misogyny and sexual abuse. Nick Wingfield's report in the *New York Times* following the death threats against Sarkeesian picked up on the false allegations of sex for good reviews and incorrectly reported that GamerGate was more about 'ethical problems among game journalists and political correctness in their coverage. The more extreme threats, though, seem to be the work of a much smaller faction and aimed at women' (Wingfield 2014).

Conclusion

For Sarkeesian, Caroline Wilson and others the issue is quite clearly that the online system is failing: 'It should be noted that none of the social media services I use have adequate structures built-in to effectively deal with cyber mob style harassment' (Sarkeesian 2012). In 2012, Sarkeesian was calling for internet services to do a much better job of providing the tools and functionality that empower those being harassed and abused via their systems (including sharable block-lists, some sense of real accountability for those doing the bullying, and real live human beings working behind the scenes): 'These issues need to be taken seriously by the institutions that make up our online social media' (Sarkeesian 2012).

Yet the abuse continues and little has been done to make the internet a safer place for female journalists. In 2015, Turkish journalist Amberin Zaman spoke about receiving hundreds of tweets 'using the most obscene language, threatening to kill me, threatening to rape me ...

#Dox: To search for and publish private or identifying information about a particular individual on the internet, typically with malicious intent.



... like a public lynching' (Zaman 2015). Dunja Mijatović, media law expert and representative on Freedom of the Media for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), said in early 2015 that online abuse against female journalists is 'a global phenomenon growing at a very rapid pace' (Mijatović 2015). Mijatović, said 'swift action' was needed in order to deal with the growing number of attacks on female journalists online. 'During the past year we have become alarmed by the growing number of reports from across the OSCE region and beyond, about female journalists and bloggers being singled out and fiercely attacked in social media' (Mijatović 2015). Several female journalists, she said, had spoken out about the attacks they have received, all of which were unwarranted. Some even reported receiving serious death threats.

Jenny Alversjo, anchor for TV4 Sweden, says, 'When someone threatens to kill you ... the world stops. The first real threat was horrifying. The person who wanted me dead said I had two weeks left to live. It's hard to describe the fear I felt' (Mijatović 2015). If threats of sexual violence have become the norm for most female journalists, and a journalist's safety is a precondition for free expression and free media, the World Wide Web is not proving to be the democratising and liberating platform we had all hoped for. And this is not a women's issue: it is a human rights' issue.

The technology is neutral—it is neither good nor bad; rather, it is those who use the technology who are responsible for how it impacts on freedoms and liberties of others.

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TOOLS 3

Textual Analysis and Media Research

Jason Bainbridge

Introduction

In the preceding chapters we have explained what textual analysis is and why you might undertake it. In this Tools section we want to show you how textual analysis is done, some different forms of textual analysis and some additional tools to help you conduct your own textual analyses.

Where does textual analysis come from?

As you saw in Chapters 9 to 11, textual analysis comes out of the work of theorists known as the French structuralists in the 1960s, particularly the work of Roland Barthes (1915–80). Barthes believed that any kind of popular cultural product could be decoded by reading the signs within the text. Today, this approach is one of the primary tools media researchers use to understand how meaning is made from media texts. As media theorist McKee (2003: 1) puts it:

Textual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world. It is a methodology—a data-gathering process—for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live.

Textual analysis is also the perfect starting point for somebody writing a news story, analysing a public relations campaign or developing a television series, and an effective way of assessing, comparing and understanding media texts. It is something we all do instinctively, to some extent, but if you follow these steps, textual analysis can become a skill that, as a person involved in media, journalism, business or public life more generally, you can use to understand why certain media texts are successful, subversive or popular.

Ultimately, textual analysis is a *toolkit* for examining the media, which is applicable to very simple media forms, such as advertisements, as well as to more complex forms, such as news narratives, television series and films. It is also a toolkit for media practitioners who want to convey a certain message or try to convince audiences to think in a certain way. There should be something here of use to you, regardless of your future career in media.

As noted by McKee (2003: 1), 'When we perform textual analysis on a text, we make an educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text'. The important thing to note is that this is an *educated* guess. Your educated guess will be informed by research and completed by utilising the tools outlined below.

What is structuralism?

Structuralism is a French intellectual movement that began with the linguistics work of Ferdinand de Saussure, and was subsequently used as a model in anthropology, psychoanalysis and literary theory. Structuralists include Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Claude Lévi-Strauss.

Structuralism seeks to analyse social structures such as language and narrative to determine the structures that underlie them. Such structures often take the form of binary oppositions (hot–cold, being–nothing and culture–nature), which can then be broken down into units, such as signs, codes and rules. Structuralism is the basis of semiotics and our form of textual analysis, which includes understanding how the text is encoded, breaking down the text and framing the text.

Is there only one form of textual analysis?

There are many different ways of defining textual analysis. When, for example, US Supreme Court Judge Antonin Scalia refers to the textual analysis of the US Constitution, he is referring to having regard to the original intentions of the drafters of the Constitution, something completely at odds with the ideas of polysemy and the death of the author that we've presented in previous chapters. Our form of media studies follows the form developed by fellow media and cultural studies theorists such as Hartley (1999) and McKee (2003).

There are three important things to remember about this form of textual analysis:

- As discussed in Chapters 9 and 10, it involves a new and unique vocabulary. Don't panic! While the terms may be unfamiliar to you, the practices they describe won't be, because you engage with them every day.
- As with other media tools, you will find different uses for different tools in different situations. Not every tool is applicable to every text. They are here to help you *make meaning*. Use only the ones you need to make a persuasive and compelling argument.
- Practise using these tools on the media you encounter in your daily lives. The more often you use them, the sooner you will feel comfortable applying them.

Why textual analysis differs from the other tools in this book

Generally, the tools in this book are practical applications of some of the concepts presented in the preceding chapters. They are skills we most often label as 'journalistic', but are, in fact, transferable to a number of occupations. Textual analysis differs from these other tools in that it is a mixture of **theory** and practice.

The way we study the relationship between media, culture and society is by applying theory, and for the purposes of this book we define theory as being a critical reflection on the actual world. Furthermore, theory in itself is not an evaluative term. What makes one theory better than another, more persuasive than another or have what we may term more *academic rigour* than another are two further factors: methodology and evidence.

Media research basics: theory, research, methodology and evidence

Theory

You start with a theory: a critical reflection on the world that takes the form of a rule, idea or principle that applies to a particular subject that you want to test.

Research questions

The theory you choose becomes the basis of your research question(s), which might include, for example, 'How can this text be understood?', 'Why is it popular' and 'How does it relate to other media texts?'

theory: The body of ideas, principles and techniques that applies to a particular subject, distinct from actual practice.

Methodology

A **methodology** is a technique designed to answer such questions—a systematic way of producing knowledge that involves the production and analysis of data. A methodology is a way of testing, accepting, developing or rejecting theories.

Textual analysis (see Chapter 9) is one such methodology for testing and developing the theories raised about texts in the preceding chapters. But textual analysis is not the only methodology media researchers use. Other methodologies include taking ratings, conducting interviews (see Tools 1) and compiling audience surveys. To answer some research questions, you can even develop new methodologies, and frequently researchers use different methodologies together to do just that. This is because different methodologies produce different kinds of information.

Textual analysis is a useful methodology because it focuses on the media texts themselves. Whenever you're involved in audience research through interviews or surveys you are, in effect, creating more texts to analyse, such as statistics, articles, books and surveys. In textual analysis we always remain focused on the primary media text itself (we define what that means below).

Evidence

The **evidence** that we will be looking at will be media texts, such as films, television programs and magazines.

Evidence can be broken down into two forms: primary evidence and secondary evidence. As all of our evidence can be found in two types of texts, we can refer to these texts as being either primary texts or secondary texts.

Types of texts

Primary texts

Primary texts comprise the original information that you begin with: the primary object of study. If you were analysing an episode of a sitcom, a magazine or a particular film, you would call this text the primary text.

Depending upon your research question, you could look at more than one primary text; for example, if you were writing a historical overview of the Walt Disney Corporation, your primary texts would include the Disney films, Disney television series and Disney-linked products.

For a constitutional lawyer, the Constitution will be the primary text. For an investigative journalist writing an exposé of potentially criminal business dealings, the primary texts could include business documents and interviews with the people involved. For a surgeon, the body itself becomes the primary text.

Secondary texts

Secondary texts are the texts that make an analytical or descriptive study of the primary text or texts. They help us to understand the primary text, or otherwise clarify our analysis of the primary texts.

For academics and students, secondary texts are usually reference works taken from the body of academic literature around a subject. They could include textbooks or academic articles, lectures and seminars. For journalists, these could include other articles on the subject or interviews. For people working in public relations, they could include analyses of audience surveys or statistics.

#Methodology:

A systematic way of producing knowledge, involving both the production and analysis of data; a way of testing, accepting, developing or rejecting a theory.

#Evidence: Signs or proofs of the existence or truth of some proposition; information that helps somebody to reach a particular conclusion, through empirical materials (physical items) and observable phenomena (such as heat or cold).

#Primary text: The original information that forms the basis of the rest of textual analysis.

#Secondary text:

An analytical or descriptive study that interacts, informs or otherwise elucidates the original information you are studying.

Tools for all types of texts

Some tools are applicable to all types of texts, regardless of whether they are image or written.

Encountering the text

- Take notes about where and how you encounter the text for the first time.
- Make notes about why a text produces certain responses or encourages audiences to react in certain ways.
- Make a guess at how meaning is made; this will remain a guess (or hypothesis), but through analysis you will unpack how this meaning is made, educating your guess by continuing examination of the primary material.
- As you build up primary and secondary evidence, you may be quite surprised by how correct your gut instincts or first impressions were. They should be, because you've been unconsciously training yourself to analyse texts every day, as you live in a multimediated world.

Analysing the text

This is the way in which we educate our guess.

- Break down the text into its component signs, or units of meanings.
- Focus on the relationship between the physical part of the sign (the signifier) and what the sign signifies (the signified); that is, how each part of the sign makes meaning.

As we have seen in Chapters 9 and 10, a sign is anything that produces meaning. In analysing signs, remember the following:

- Signs do not merely comment on things in the world; they *are* things in the world (for example, street signs, clothing or parts of a magazine).
- Signs are also units of meaning: they *produce* meanings.
- Signs can produce many meanings, not just one per sign. We call this spread of possible signifieds connotations. The most stable and verifiable of these we call the denotation.
- Signs are social: they require an audience to function, and often hail this audience by *addressing* them in some way.

Encoding texts

As the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, media texts are naturally polysemic; that is, open to many interpretations. In their attempt to ensure that a particular meaning is made, the industries and individuals responsible for these texts attempt to manipulate the relationship between signifier and signified in order to direct receivers to adopt an intended message.

Therefore, the sender is **encoding** the text in a certain way, which means that we can classify texts as being either open or closed:

- **Open texts** have many meanings, depending on time, gender, race, politics, place, class, age and experience.
- **Closed texts** encourage a specific meaning and permit little space for the reader to generate different interpretations.

As a (very) general rule, the more complex the text, the more open it will be, allowing many different readings. Equally, the simpler the text, the more closed it will be, allowing relatively fewer readings.

Encoding: Closing down the possible connotations a text can have and thereby directing audiences to read texts in a certain way.

Open texts: A text that has many possible meanings.

Closed text: A text that focuses on a specific meaning and permits little space for the reader to generate a variety of interpretations.

A great deal of textual analysis will be spent understanding how the text is encoded, for as a creator of media texts you need to understand how and why you can encode a text. Similarly, as a consumer you should be able to identify the ways in which the text is being encoded.

Tips for determining whether a text is open or closed

There are three principal ways senders attempt to produce closed texts in order to limit the range of connotations available or specifically encode a spread of signifieds around a certain signifier:

- **Anchorage** is the use of captions or commentary designed to select and/or control the connotations that can be made by a reader. This anchors an image text (through a caption) or a written text (through a headline) to a certain meaning.
- A **metaphor** is an implicit or explicit comparison between signs by which the qualities of one are transferred to another. Imagine a big equals sign between two aspects of the text, whether words or pictures or a combination of the two. An advertisement showing an attractive woman using a brand of lipstick, for example, metaphorically means that if you use this lipstick, you can also become glamorous, sexually attractive and slim: the lipstick becomes the metaphor for personal success.
- **Metonymy** is a part or element of something used to stand for the whole. At its simplest, a pair of muscular legs in an advertisement represents an entire person. We assume that the rest of the person continues outside the frame; we are not looking at just a pair of dismembered legs. In complex metonyms, a person can stand for all people, a colour can represent an entire product (such as Coca-Cola's use of red and white), a symbol can represent a company (the Nike swoosh or the McDonald's arches) or a particular writing style can represent a particular way of being (class, taste or passion).

These methods of encoding, anchorage, metaphor and metonymy can also work together. A strong arm wearing a watch with the slogan 'Testosterone Watches—for real men', for example, would be a combined example of anchorage, metaphor and metonymy. The caption anchors the image: we know it refers to a particular brand of watch, as it is a watch advertisement. The arm works metonymically, in that it stands in not just for the rest of the model (who we assume continues outside the frame of the ad) but also for all men. The arm also works metaphorically; that is, it transfers the strength of the arm to the strength of the watch. The implication is that if you wear a Testosterone watch you, too, will be a strong man—a real man. This could appeal to women, too; if they buy their boyfriend, husband or colleague a Testosterone watch, it will make him a strong man, a real man, and by inference a man who appeals to a woman. These ideas of encoding are derived from the work of British cultural theorist, Stuart Hall (1980)

Decoding texts

Audiences can decode texts in very different ways. The ways they decode texts will often depend on their familiarity with media practice (their media literacy) or their cultural competency (recognising intertexts as and when they occur) and whether or not they share the same beliefs as those who produced the text. This is particularly true as people are exposed to media at an early age and have access to all sorts of resources (including this textbook) to educate and empower themselves about how media function.

#Anchorage: The tying of an image text (through a caption) or a written text (through a headline) to a certain meaning.

#Metaphor: An implicit or explicit comparison between signs, where the qualities of one are transferred to another.

#Metonymy: The standing in of a part or element of a text for the whole.

To reflect this, Hall (1980) suggested audiences decode texts using a number of different reading strategies:

- A *dominant reading* is where the audience member accepts the message as presented (including any underlying ideology).
- A *negotiated reading* is where the audience member accepts most of the message as presented, subject to some reinterpretation and adaptation around their own needs and situation.
- A *resistant reading* is where the audience member rejects the message as presented as a result of their own needs, situation or other oppositional relation.

Advertising

Still having trouble breaking down texts? Try these tools on some of the advertisements you might encounter on public transport, on television, in newspapers or in magazines. Advertisements are often the simplest texts, because they are so clearly encoded to make you think a certain way—that you need to buy this product or service. It is estimated that the average Australian sees 1500 marketing messages every day and 240 30-second television commercials per week.

Cultural studies theorist Raymond Williams (2000) once called advertising the ‘official art of modern capitalist society’, for the following reasons:

- Advertising is one of the oldest forms of media.
- Advertising informs much of the media we consume, as it provides the main source of income for media owners.
- Advertising orients the range of entertainment and information produced by the media towards those audiences advertisers want to reach. In developing a program or publication, the question of who it may appeal to is an artistic and commercial matter, though public broadcasters such as the ABC and the BBC are seen to be exceptions to this. This is the idea of show business we discussed in Chapters 7 and 10.
- Advertising is all about image (signifier) and association (signified), rather than product (see below).

Framing the text

Framing the text involves two considerations:

- The frame of the text is the way the text is presented to us.
- The context is where the text is located, and how it is encountered by use.

In looking at the frame of the text, ask yourself not only why certain elements have been included, but also what has been left out. Ask yourself why these elements have been left out. How does this affect the possible meanings the text might have?

In thinking about what is *not* included in the frame, look at **structuring absences**: what is missing from a text, and what meaning these omissions might connote. Since all media texts are mediations of the world, affected by a series of choices and selections, and framed in a certain way, we must always be aware of what is not included in the text. For example:

- What is missing?
- What choices have been made in leaving out this or that element?
- What meaning might be elicited from this absence(s)?
- What selection of images and information has occurred?

structuring absences:
elements in the text that
have meaning despite (or
because of) the fact they
have been left out.

In thinking about analysing what is included in the frame, use the exnomination and commutation tools to help you determine how meaning is made:

- **Exnomination** is the process by which dominant ideas become so obvious they don't draw attention to themselves; instead they just seem like common sense, and subsequently are rarely challenged. When you nominate something, for example, a skin-coloured bandaid in a text, you draw attention to it. The bandaid is pink and therefore the implication is that anything other than pink cannot be considered skin coloured. The phrase 'skin-coloured bandaid', therefore, works hegemonically to reinforce certain ideas of race, which is a form of racism that doesn't draw attention to itself. Therefore, you need to be aware of exnomination so that you can draw out the subtleties of power relations in texts, particularly where they work with other intertexts to support a certain ideology of the world.
- **Commutation** is the replacement of one element of a text with another one to see how this affects how meaning is made; for example, substitute man for woman, black for white, arm for leg or young for old to find out how these substitutions alter the meaning of the text.

#Exnomination: The process by which dominant ideas become so obvious they don't draw attention to themselves; instead they just seem like common sense.

#Commutation: The replacement of one element of a text with another to see how this affects how meaning is made.

Context

When looking at the context of a text, consider the following:

- What is the time in which the text was created?
- In what type of media product is the text located?
- Where is the media text placed in that product? For example, is it located towards the front of a newspaper or magazine, or does it go to air during prime time or late at night?
- What is the country of origin (and reception) for the text?
- Which industry is responsible for the text's creation?

Recognise that the context may be somewhat artificial. You could be encountering the text as a result of an assignment from your boss or an academic exercise set at university. Try to keep in mind the regular context for such a text, otherwise it will remain abstracted from the wider culture and society.

Intertexts

While the primary text should remain the focus of textual analysis, intertexts can help us understand how meaning is produced by a text. As we saw in Chapter 9, intertexts are interrelated, interdependent texts that relate to either primary or secondary texts, and can inform us about how meaning is made from the primary text. They can include production records, academic articles or other media programs in a similar genre.

Texts frequently make meaning through their relationship with other texts. Indeed, as we have seen time and again, the logic of representation in the mediasphere is intertextual, because social and political significance cannot be achieved by reading a single text.

Specific tools for specific types of texts

Because of the variety of texts, we also need specialised tools designed for particular texts. Some texts (such as newspapers, novels or letters) are primarily written, while others (such as films, television programs or computer games) are primarily image based. Still others (such as comic books or websites) are combinations of the two. Just as you would select a screwdriver for some household

jobs and a hammer for others, you would use these specific tools for some specific textual jobs and not others. The following sections examine the process of analysing image texts and written texts.

Analysing image texts

As we saw in Chapter 6, films can provide us with a vocabulary that we can use to analyse still and moving image texts; that is, photographs and films. This involves breaking down these image texts into their individual components, naming each component and seeing how each works as a unit of meaning. These parts of an image's composition are similar to the signs we discussed earlier, in that they are all comprised of a signifier (a physical or aural element) and a signified (the mental element we associate with that physical part).

This means we can read image texts just as we would a written text. This shouldn't be that surprising—after all, the literal definition of photography is 'writing with light'.

When we read a still image text such as a photograph or a piece of art we look at two aspects of the text:

- *the form of the text*: the shape of the text and the way it appears before us
- *the content of the text*: what is actually there, what is the subject of the text and how that subject is presented to us.

When we read a moving image text such as film or television, we not only look at the form and the content, but also the way the film is put together—the camera movement, the sound and the editing.

Tools for still image texts

The **form** is the shape of the text and the way it appears before us.

Components of the form

- *Frame*: what is the size of the image and how has the image been presented?
 - Has the image been cropped or cut?
 - Why have particular elements been cut out?
 - Where is the centre of the image?
 - Does the important part of the image fill the frame, or is it alone in the centre of the frame?
 - Does this make the image dominant or isolated?
- *Lens type*: which lens has been used to shoot the image?
 - A telephoto lens can signify voyeurism, giving the impression that you are seeing something you shouldn't see.
 - A standard lens can signify normality, placing the audience at ease.
 - A wide angle lens can signify drama, placing the audience in a state of anticipation.
- *Film stock*: is it a digital shot or a shot created on film stock?
 - Think about why the producer of the image has made the choice they have. Has the image been shot digitally so it can be manipulated in some way?
 - 'Fast film' and 'slow film' are terms that refer to the speed at which the film stock responds to the light. A fast film stock produces a grainy, documentary look that can appear unguarded and real. A slow film stock produces a high resolution image that can appear more normal.

Form: The shape of the text and the way it appears before us.

- *Camera angle*: how has the image been shot?
 - Are you looking up at the figure (implying a low camera angle) or are you looking down at the figure (implying a high camera angle)? Low angles often reinforce the power of the figure on the screen; high angles may signify subservience.
 - For drawings or pieces of art, you can substitute the words point of view for camera angle.
- *Height*: at what height was the shot taken?
 - Is the shot taken higher or lower than how you would normally view this image?
 - Does it encourage you to look at the image in a certain way? Does it, for example, offer a child's-eye view of the world or a bird's-eye view of the world? (The most common height is eye level, which is just under 2 metres.)
- *Level*: what level was the camera when the shot was taken?
 - Usually, this will be straight on (0 degrees), but altering the level of the camera can create a feeling of disorder, unease or chaos.
- *Distance*: what distance is the object from the camera?
 - *Extreme long shots* are for landscapes or aerial photography.
 - *Long shots* (for groups of people) are for setting a scene; that is, placing subjects into a context.
 - *Medium shots* (one or two people) place members of the audience at a safe distance to observe without feeling as though they are intruding.
 - *Medium close-ups* (part of body) focus the audience's attention on something important.
 - *Close-ups* (face) place the audience in an intimate relationship with the subject, usually signifying an emotional moment.
 - *Extreme close-ups* (part of face) can, conversely, create distance by making something familiar appear strange.
- *Depth of field*: what was the focus range of the shot?
 - *Deep focus* (where the whole scene is in focus) is an expressive technique by which the entire content of the shot becomes unnatural and strange. All parts of the content (or *mise-en-scène*; see below) add to this.
 - *Selective focus* (where some parts of the shot remain indistinct) signifies what is important in a shot.
 - *Soft focus* (where the shot appears fuzzy or somewhat indistinct) can signify nostalgia in the form of a flashback, a dream state, romance or glamour.

Components of the content

The **content** is what is actually inside the frame: the subject of the text and how that subject is presented to us. In film, this is often referred to as the *mise-en-scène* (French for 'put on stage').

- *The subject(s)*: What was the focus of the shot?
- *The setting*: What was the background (an indication of the physical and temporal location for the shot)?

#Content: The subject of the text, and how that subject is presented to us.

- *The lighting*: How was the shot lit? Lighting often signifies mood.
 - *High-key lighting* can indicate optimism.
 - *Low-key lighting* can indicate a sombre mood.
 - *Back lighting* can create a halo effect around an actor, making him or her appear glamorous.
 - *Fill lighting* can appear natural and a lack of fill lighting can highlight the contrast between light and dark, something particularly common in the film noir genre.
- Be aware of where the lighting is coming from (above, behind or in front).
- Be aware of whether the lighting is of equal intensity (which is unlikely), and think about why certain elements are better lit than others.
- Be aware of where the light is *supposed* to be coming from: is this because natural light is being used, or is the lighting being used to convey a certain mood?

Tools for moving-image texts

For moving-image texts, in addition to looking at form and content, also look at the following:

- *Camera movement*: How was the camera moving? Why was this decision made? How did it position the audience in relation to the subject?
 - *Pan* is where the camera moves horizontally from a fixed position, to enable the audience to survey an area or follow a subject at a distance.
 - *Tracking (or dolly) shot* is where the camera moves on tracks (a very smooth movement), positioning members of the audience so they can follow a movement from a close proximity.
 - *Tilt* is where the camera moves to the left or right, enabling an audience to follow a movement up and down.
 - *Crane shot* is where the camera moves up or down; ultimately, a helicopter shot, signifying drama through the rapidity of the movement towards or away from the subject.
 - *Handheld* is the shaky documentary style that can appear natural or create a point-of-view shot.
 - *Zoom* involves altering the focal length of a shot to bring us closer to an object. A zoom in enables the audience to see detail from a distance, akin to a telephoto lens. A zoom out places the subject into context.
- *Sound*: Where was the sound coming from, and why was it used in this way?
 - *Diegetic sound* comes from within the film shot, such as somebody talking or somebody singing, a gunshot from a gun, a tyre bursting or a laser firing.
 - *Extradiegetic sound* comes from outside the film shot. It is only on the soundtrack; it has no obvious source in the diegesis of the film (the world of the film). Music is often extradiegetic, and signifies an emotional state; in a horror film, for example, it can signify tension, imminent peril or a madman with a very big knife standing just behind you.
- *Editing*: How was the film cut and put together (creating the illusion of continuous motion)?
 - *Montage* is the compression of time and space through the juxtaposition of a series of images. Why are the scenes being cut in this way? What does the juxtaposition of these images signify?
 - *The 180-degree rule* establishes an axis of action that shows us where the characters are (for example, the two shot, shot–reverse shot and establishing shot).

- *The cut*: How does a particular cut (or edit) highlight a particular scene or signify a change in mood between scenes?
 - *Fade-out* is a fade to black as the scene ends.
 - *Fade-in* is the reverse of a fade-out.
 - *Dissolve* is where a second shot fades in, superimposed over the first shot.
 - *Wipe* is where it appears as if a curtain has come across the screen.

Analysing written texts

Written texts include books, magazines, newspapers, phone messages and captions for images. The following tools enable written texts to be analysed in terms of their individual components (content analysis) and for their contributions to wider social and cultural ideas (discourse analysis) (also see Chapter 10).

While content analysis and discourse analysis are usually applied to written texts, there is no reason why they could not also be applied to image texts. You could do a content analysis based on the frequency of John Wayne's appearances in film westerns of the 1950s, the frequency of underweight models in the pages of a fashion magazine or interviews on current affairs television programs about Indigenous communities.

Content analysis

Content analysis is a type of textual analysis that focuses on the frequency of presence or absence of certain words or categories within texts, often involving the estimation of how often a word, phrase or name recurs in the media.

Content analysis can inform a study of representation. If, for example, you were studying the impact of Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* on people's perceptions of climate change, you could count and list how many times *An Inconvenient Truth* appeared in news reports. Furthermore, you could list how many times the words 'climate change' appeared in print before and after the release of the film.

Content analysis is a unique form of textual analysis, in that it can be used by itself as a quantitative measure, or as part of a larger textual analysis once you have completed your content analysis, you can then look at how meaning is made by breaking down the texts where the relevant terms appear. It has the advantage of requiring precise research objectives and sample sizes, but at the same time can be a subjective measure as the researcher develops his or her own categories for research. This is, though, frequently limited by time and budget, so content analysis is best used in a pilot study, in conjunction with detailed textual analysis or audience research that can demonstrate how frequency relates to how meaning is made.

Discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is a specific form of textual analysis that focuses on the ways in which media texts support or subvert such aspects of the world as the unequal distribution of power in society, or the legitimisation or subversion of one presentation of the world (white or patriarchal, for example) while excluding others (African, queer or feminist, for example). In the context of journalism studies,

#Content analysis:

Analysis that focuses on the frequency of the presence or absence of words or categories within texts.

#Discourse analysis:

An analysis of how texts support or subvert overall views of the world, such as patriarchy or media power.

discourse analysis has been rigorously applied to journalistic texts such as British newspapers to explore how the routine practices of journalism, and the interdependence of news reports and interviews on government reports and press releases, help to legitimate certain positions at the expense of others. Elements that scholars have looked at include the choice of words, the tense and the expert voice used in stories on riots, youth issues and Indigenous issues.

Discourse analysis, therefore, focuses on the way texts work together to provide certain ways of representing the world. It works best on a sample of texts, rather than individual texts, looking at the intertextual relationship between these texts and the larger ideas of representing the world that are produced as a result. But as it requires a sample, it is also subject to the same accusations as content analysis; that is, it can be used in a subjective way. Discourse analysis is best applied in tandem with some more detailed individual textual analysis to demonstrate how the production of discourse affects how meaning is made.

Conclusion

Using textual analysis as a toolkit to analyse media should enable you to make educated guesses about how media texts function and the meanings that can be derived, a skill that is as necessary for the work of journalists, writers and public relations campaigners as it is for media producers and students of media. Use it frequently and have fun with it, and it will soon enable you to move from being a consumer of media to an educated consumer of media, and then to a skilled media practitioner in your own right.

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4

PART MAKING NEWS

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News is new information. It is the start of the dialogue, the introduction of new information into the mediasphere. In Part 4 we consider how news is made. We look at News Values and News Culture, how news is selected and the culture of the newsroom, before turning to the specifics of Broadcast News, the Elements of Writing, Subediting, News Language and Convention and Specialist Reporting.

Case Study 4 (Guarding the Guards: Holding Democratic Governments to Account) shows how secrecy obscures undemocratic behaviour by governments and why specialised reporting skills and a fourth estate ethos help make the unseen visible. This study focuses particularly on the American whistleblower Edward Snowden, and also on one of Australia's most significant hidden stories: the events at the Maralinga nuclear test range in South Australia.

Tools 4 (Writing Features) provides the knowhow needed to bring together the strands of journalistic endeavour we have looked at to date, to produce high quality journalistic writing in the longer and more creative formats of features.

12

NEWS VALUES AND NEWS CULTURE IN A CHANGING WORLD

SARAH GILLMAN

How much information do you sift through each and every day? Think about it. Across all of your different devices, visualise the volume of facts, ideas, opinions, tips, advice and even gossip and social titbits you receive in 24 hours. A number of researchers have attempted to quantify this with one study showing that each of us receive more than five times as much information as we did in the mid 1990s when the internet was just becoming more commonplace. This, according to a study by Dr Martin Hilbert of the University of Southern California (Hilbert & Lopez 2011), amounts to 174 newspapers of data a day. Since this landmark survey was published, the growth has continued, with the advent of so many more social networks and new digital technology.

So what do you do with all this information? At the corporate and academic level, new programs and systems have been developed to capture rapid data flow; to provide companies and universities, for example, with information they can use for research and to boost productivity. This is the field of big data (discussed in Chapter 4). But at the individual level, you probably don't have such sophisticated systems on hand (although many of the social networks and programs you use may have introduced their own technical programs to help you process all the information you receive). The odds are, however, that you mentally process the flow and sift out the information that not only makes sense to you, but that you also care about in some way, or that captures your attention.

In this way then, you are doing what journalists and media professionals (such as photographers, camera operators, editors, producers and researchers) do every day—by filtering and analysing information, you are translating information into your own version of *news* by using your own core criteria to determine what *is newsworthy* to you and what you will do with it. This process involves, and reflects, values—and in the media, these are known as *news values*.

In this chapter we look at:

- definitions of news
- news values
- news culture and the socialisation of media professionals
- news discourse, narratives and framing
- gatekeeping and agenda setting.

We also consider how news values are influenced to evolve as they reflect the changing media landscape.

DEFINITIONS OF NEWS

Think about the term ‘news’ yourself. How do *you* define news? Perhaps you think of it as being a piece of information that you didn’t know about before. But then you might say to yourself: ‘Well, so what? Just because I didn’t know something before, or just because something is new, doesn’t make it “newsworthy” to me’. In other words, just because information is previously unknown is not necessarily enough to make you sit back and take notice of it. So think about a piece of information that does do that. How is it different? What other factors contribute to making it interesting and noteworthy and perhaps something you’d pass on in conversation with your friends. Is it a piece of information about someone you know, for example? Or is it about where you live? Does it have a direct impact on your life? Are there consequences for you as a result of receiving this information? Does it involve conflict? Or is it just a bit weird and unusual? Now think about a piece of information that stops you in your tracks. What elements does it contain? Does it combine several or all of these elements?

Just like you, journalists and media professionals ask similar questions about information they receive. They apply news values.

News values

In the 1960s, Norwegian academics Galtung and Ruge produced what is regarded as the seminal paper on **news values**. They uncovered a set of criteria they argued helped explain why and how information became news stories. Studying newspaper and broadcast news, Galtung and Ruge (1965) showed that even though professionals working in newsrooms appeared to be using intuition and experience to select and prioritise particular stories, common elements could be applied across different news organisations—in other words, the same information was being selected as newsworthy and given similar treatment across different newsrooms and by different journalists and media professionals. Since then, a number of other studies have researched media outlets

#News values: Criteria that the media apply to determine if and what information will be produced as news; including impact, proximity, prominence, human interest, novelty, conflict and currency.

and individuals to determine the criteria used to judge whether something becomes a news story. Despite some minor variations that go to the actual terms used, they show that professionals working in news apply the following characteristics to pieces of information to decide whether they are newsworthy:

- impact
- proximity
- prominence
- human interest
- novelty
- conflict
- currency.

Impact

One of the first values that journalists and media professionals apply to a potential news story is **impact**. What are the consequences of this piece of information? The greater the impact or the wider and deeper the consequences, the 'bigger' the story will be. A 'big' story is one that captures attention and comes to dominate the top of bulletins and the front pages of newspapers. Online, it will dominate the homepage, and often feature additional links and side stories as well as photos. As we'll see, the concept of a 'big' news story is undergoing some transformation due to changes in news production, culture and consumption, but to understand what journalists mean when they use the term 'big', think about an event you are probably familiar with: the 2009 Victorian bushfires. This event had significant *impact* or *consequence* for the people directly and immediately affected by the fires: 173 people died, 414 people were injured and many others lost their homes. Buildings were destroyed, along with stock, other animals and tracts of forest. The fires also had significant impact for people living throughout the state of Victoria, as everything from the air quality to resources were affected. The estimated cost was more than \$4.5 billion. Afterwards, the Victorian Government established a Royal Commission to investigate the causes of and responses to the bushfires. The Commission's findings and recommendations have had impact on fire services and government agencies, not just in Victoria but also across Australia, via changes to regulations on warning systems and the coordination of emergency services. At the local government level, councils across Australia have implemented changes to planning regulations. Emergency services, including the police and fire services, have considered their warning and communications systems and moved to embrace new technology. Law suits continue to wind their way through the courts. So the impact of a news story can be defined as the strength of its effect on a society. As with all the values that are applied in determining news, measuring the impact of a piece of information can change when combined with the other values, such as proximity.

Proximity

Proximity relates to the place where an event is happening. Information often becomes newsworthy if it is about something happening in the immediate vicinity or close by to where the media is producing news and to where audiences are consuming it. Proximity relates to the idea that we

Impact: The size of the consequences of a news story; the greater or wider the consequences of a news story, the greater will its impact.

Proximity: The distance the news event from the audience; the closer the proximity of news to the environment of the person absorbing a news story, the greater the impact of the news item.

notice or care about things that relate to our own environment. For example, a story about a bushfire will be extremely newsworthy to people living in the vicinity, but may have less newsworthiness to people who live thousands of kilometres away. However, as the 2009 Victorian bushfires show, when the event escalates and people die, hundreds of houses are destroyed and normal everyday living is disrupted, there is greater impact and so its reach or conceptual sense of being ‘nearby’ extends. Developments such as the internet and satellite communication means that news events happening at a distance appear to be closer to us than ever before, because we are provided with up-to-the-minute information. Proximity originally reflects the concept that if information is happening in our environment, then it is likely to impact on us or involve people we know. This touches on another value, prominence.

Prominence

When journalists and media professionals are assessing information to determine its newsworthiness, they check to see whether it involves people who are well known. **Prominence** may be measured on a variety of levels, from the very local to the international. Traditionally, information regarding significant people within a society such as political leaders has become news because their actions can impact on many others. When the Prime Minister makes announcements for example, they are reported because they will have some level of impact on us. But prominence also demonstrates that ‘names make news’. Prominence as a news value has been significantly influenced in recent years by the rise of celebrity in our society (see Chapter 11). While the antics of an individual celebrity may not impact on us at all, the information becomes newsworthy because it is about someone who is prominent. Interestingly, when the media confers celebrity status on someone, he or she is subsequently deemed to be prominent and potentially newsworthy. People who are famous can be symbolic and so their prominence as individuals can be heightened, especially in the 24-hours news and social media environments. The shock death of Australian cricketer Philip Hughes in November 2014 is an example of this. News of his accident at the Sydney Cricket Ground quickly spread via Twitter and Facebook, and then online media and blogs. Established media outlets covered the story, and over the next few days followed the original event with updates on his condition, and carried pictures and news of visits to his bedside by his teammates, former cricketers and others. The chances are that you consumed this information as news yourself. Perhaps, like so many other people, you also followed—or took part in—the ‘put your bats out’ tribute that became a social media sensation. News outlets also covered Philip Hughes’s funeral in the New South Wales country town of Macksville and then issues surrounding the subsequent Test series between Australia and India. Why? We can better understand the change in the way prominence is being applied as a news value by looking at another value: human interest.

#Prominence: A news value in which one or more of the protagonists in a media story are well known, thus adding to the newsworthiness of the story.

Human interest

Human interest stories revolve around stories of ordinary people, or issues that journalists and media professionals decide are socially interesting or important. Often they are called ‘colour stories’ or ‘soft news features’ and will be used to provide a human face to a harder, more

#Human interest: In the context of news, stories that revolve around ordinary people, or issues judged to be socially interesting or important.

complex story. Every year after the Federal Treasurer brings down the Budget, the media carries reports about how the Budget will impact on 'ordinary people'. This provides a human interest element to the drier financial and political news story. Human interest news stories also tend to give us glimpses into the experiences of other people, to publicise their achievements or their difficulties by which we can measure our own status and well-being. Human interest stories feature strongly on, for example, Australia Day and Anzac Day when the media extends coverage of official events to stories about 'everyday' recipients of awards and medals. Just as celebrity has impacted on the value of prominence in recent years, it has tended to elevate human interest as a news value in some cases. When the Malaysian Airline Flight 17 en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down over Ukraine in July 2014, 283 passengers and 15 crew members lost their lives. You will recall many aspects to this story from international politics and discussions about global flight paths to Malaysian Airlines's terrible luck (the airline had only months before lost MH370 in mysterious circumstances). Significant media attention was also paid to the individuals who were on board, bringing home to us the impact of the event on 'ordinary' people.

It has been argued that journalists and media professionals working in the fast-paced global world of news find it easier to produce human interest stories because they don't usually require long periods of investigative reporting or many resources. They can be produced by turning interviews into stories that 'carry' to audiences around the world. Often human interest as a news value is coupled with another value, novelty.

Novelty

Information that reveals something that is rare, unusual or even bizarre is potentially newsworthy. **Novelty** as a news value reflects information that is noteworthy, which attracts attention and provides a talking point (of the 'Man Lifts Forklift Truck' variety). Traditionally, novelty stories have provided fillers in newspapers, or been placed at the end of television news bulletins. However, in the new post-industrial world of media—where you have greater ability to select the stories you want to read, see or hear about—novelty stories are increasingly highlighted because media outlets can gauge how popular they are. Novelty as a news value also reflects changes in society. For example, when Louise Brown was the first child to be born as a result of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) in 1978 in the UK, her story and that of her parents and medical team made news around the world. Since then millions more babies have been born via IVF and the event is no longer novel or unusual. It's no longer 'news'.

Conflict

Journalists and media professionals consider information potentially newsworthy if it involves **conflict**. This can be a significant violent conflict like a war or a non-violent conflict such as a disagreement. Often conflicts simmer for a time, but when they erupt, they have impact and consequence and attract attention. Conflict as a news value is connected to our basic need for security and well-being. Some of the earliest forms of what we can define as journalism are about wars and battles. These early forms also relay stories about disasters such as earthquakes and floods that involve people battling natural phenomena, or otherwise being in conflict with nature.

Novelty: In the context of news, stories that reveal something rare, unusual or bizarre are newsworthy.

Conflict: A state of opposition or hostilities; in the context of judgments about what makes news, conflict might be a significant violent conflict like a war or non-violent conflict such as a disagreement.

Conflict, then, involves information that creates uncertainty or has an uncertain outcome. If you study the words, pictures and sounds of news, you will notice that conflict also underpins a lot of the language used in news. You may also find examples of how a sense of conflict is created by journalist and media professionals. A 'War in the Boardroom' headline, for example, usually doesn't mean that company directors launched missiles and grenades at each other, but it probably points to a major disagreement they had. Similarly, when one cricket team destroys another's attack, it's unlikely to be a literal report of the match, but a metaphorical one, using words and images to create drama and conflict.

Currency

Finally, in terms of news values, journalists and media professionals assess whether information given to them is current. **Currency** as a news value relates to information that is currently being discussed as news. For example, if information about internet crime comes to light, it can generate more news stories because both the media and the public's awareness of, and interest in, the issue is heightened. Think of a time when you've learned the meaning of a new word. Often, straight afterwards, you seem to see it everywhere. A similar thing can happen in the media. When a topic is the focus of a story, the currency of it can generate subsequent stories. Currency also often arises from news stories that provoke controversial and emotional reactions. When a crime has been committed, for example, it can often be the subject of public discourse; in some cases prompting calls for changes to laws. Stories will be produced backgrounding the development of legal discussion and any changes giving voice to the various sides of the debate while the topic remains a current focus of attention. Similarly, stories can become current again due to new developments or anniversaries.

At this point, you are probably starting to assess these values for yourself; you might notice that they can be qualified and there is no specific order to their application. News values are not fixed. Instead, news values are relative and fluid; that is, they are applied and assessed against each other and often in various combinations; for example, a conflict that is far away but involves prominent people, or an event about ordinary people but involves them doing something unusual. Every day journalists and media professionals debate whether information is newsworthy, both informally among themselves and in formal editorial conferences. When something happens, however, that journalists and media professionals assess as encompassing many or all of the news values, then it is judged to be a 'big story' and can develop into a media event.

Using Dayan and Katz's definition (1994), a **media event** is a news story that can be described as an historical mass communication event. Coverage interrupts the normal flow of news as media outlets dedicate staff, resources and space to generating material about the event. Bromley (2005: 313) describes this 'splurge' journalism as 'the instant, sweeping coverage of major events'. Examples range from prearranged and 'known or anticipated' events such as a royal wedding or major sporting events to unanticipated and impromptu events such as the Sydney Lindt Café siege or natural disasters. **Splurge journalism** has been aided and abetted by technical developments and, as you have read in previous chapters, it can be influenced by spin doctors and the power of public relations. However, when deciding how to cover these events, and indeed whether to actually cover them at all, journalists and media professionals still apply news values.

#Currency: In the context of news, the impact of recent and breaking news arising from controversial and emotionally charged events.

#Media event: A news story that becomes an historically important communication event, interrupting the flow of all other news.

#Splurge journalism: The up-to-the-minute, immediate saturation coverage of major events.

News values, then, not only determine whether a piece of information becomes a news story, but also how it will be covered, who constructs the news story, and where and how it will appear in a newspaper or bulletin or on a web page. In assessing news values, journalists and media professionals apply the basic criteria of who, what, where, when, why and how (which you have already read about in earlier chapters).

News values are a *model* for processing information to assess newsworthiness. Remember, in an age when information is bombarding us, we all adopt criteria to filter, analyse and give context and meaning to the enormous amount of data we receive. If you think about how you process information given to you, you will notice you make decisions about how to process the information based on your individual experiences and understanding of the world. When we look at news values, we can begin to see that 'news' is a product resulting from a series of judgments made by media professionals, involving the application of commonly and broadly shared values. This model provides a framework for the production of news. Let's have a look at how news values are developed.

IDENTIFY THE NEWS VALUES

Identify news stories from a variety of outlets: your local newspaper, a national newspaper and an electronic news bulletin. Make a judgment about the news values that have informed each story. Can you clearly see a story that has been selected on the basis of proximity to an audience, for example, or because of the prominence of one or more people discussed in the story?

NEWS CULTURE AND NEWSROOM SOCIALISATION

Traditionally, news values have been fostered in newsrooms through the socialisation of journalists and media professionals. The process of socialisation occurs when members of a group learn and adopt commonly shared customs, attitudes and values. We all undergo periods of socialisation throughout our lives. Think about how you learnt to fit in at high school or worked out how to behave in a job. Similarly, think about how your behaviour and beliefs change in different circumstances. If you play sport, for example, you might find your actions and language are slightly different from when you are attending a family get together. Through this process of socialisation we are acculturised; that is, we learn and take on the characteristics of a specific culture.

The socialisation of journalists and media professionals embeds them into **news culture**, which we can define as the predominating attitudes and behaviours that characterise the operations of newsrooms and media organisations. Journalists and media professionals adopt the patterns and beliefs of their respective industries and institutions. For example, a journalist or camera operator with Channel Seven's *Sunrise* program might have slightly different views on what a news story is and how it should be pursued and presented than someone working at the *Australian Financial Review* newspaper. Similarly, media professionals working for an online media organisation might also display different working patterns when applying news values. This reflects their embedding into a particular news culture.

Traditionally in Australia, news has been produced on the basis of a hierarchical and bureaucratic system, with newsrooms generally having a chain of command to process information

News culture: The predominating attitudes and behaviours that characterise the operations of newsrooms and media organisations.

into news stories, reflecting the industrial form of journalism (sometimes described as the factory form of journalism). This has been a powerful force in socialising new recruits into news culture. In fact, this has meant the production of news culture starts before new recruits join the newsroom. The selection criteria used to determine who gets a cadetship or a job in itself reflects previous socialisation and shows the ongoing influence of news culture. In 2001, Tapsall and Varley undertook a survey of experienced Australian journalists to find out what skills and attributes were needed to work as a journalist:

Based on 'Definition: Journalist' survey responses, the top skills and attributes identified as necessary for a contemporary Australian journalist (in rank order) are:

- communication skills
- a questioning, curious, and inquisitive mind
- writing abilities
- news sense
- knowledge of computers, technology literate
- listening skills
- general knowledge
- empathy, patience and understanding
- a sense of working for more than self (the notion of a public responsibility)
- language skills
- interviewing skills.

Other abilities mentioned—far less frequently than those above—include the ability to meet deadlines, thinking/knowledge analysis skills, resourcefulness and persistence, truthfulness, accuracy, and integrity. (Tapsall & Varley 2001: 11)

Since then there have been significant developments in media technology. News is produced round the clock across multiple outlets or platforms. In the digital media age, constant interaction with sources and audiences is commonplace, and technology allows media outlets to assess which stories attract most attention and for how long. News is described as content, and its production and publication has become streamlined as journalists and media professionals have become multiskilled and can publish news in different forms at an instant. Yet despite this, editors and others responsible for recruiting cadet journalists and media trainees still look for recruits who display similar characteristics listed by Tapsall and Varley. In his reflection on his first year as a multiplatform cadet for the ABC in 2014, Carl Smith (2014) notes that despite witnessing significant changes taking place in newsrooms and being told from day one that accepted practices like the 'old filing regime' had changed, his year 'started with "cadet camp", where our mentors described what the ideal ABC multiplatform journalist of tomorrow would look like' (Smith 2014).

Socialisation produces news culture that is learned and refined via:

- education (such as the study of journalism and media at university)
- training
- cadetships
- contacts
- immersion into particular 'rounds' or in different work areas of an organisation

#Socialisation: The process by which individuals are embedded into a culture, consequently learning, absorbing and practising particular characteristics of that culture.

- social relationships with colleagues
- assignment of roles within newsrooms and organisations
- promotion of positions within news organisations
- the impact of diversity among media professionals and within organisations
- the spread of multiskilling.

News culture then produces news values, which are expressed in the selection of information as stories that are produced in a narrative form using news language or discourse.

DISCOURSE AND NARRATIVES

News culture produces **news discourse**. Discourse is the way we express ideas in written and spoken language; journalists and media professionals regard information as newsworthy when they can talk of it using news terms like *story*, *lead* and *angle*. News discourse reflects news values that are applied to also determine whether a story is *hard* news or *soft* news.

Traditionally in newsrooms, information using news discourse is framed within *narratives*, so we get the term ‘news story’. Information is packaged into a format with a beginning, a middle and an end, even if the beginning and end are not conclusive. This narrative style of news reflects the way we tend to process information generally. Think about the way you pass on information to friends. It probably follows a pattern: a hook to grab their attention, some background to make sure they know who or what you are talking about, then some detail, followed by a conclusion of sorts. This is narrative style. When information is not conveyed in a general narrative style, it can be frustrating and difficult to understand. There’s nothing worse than being subjected to a conversation that seems to start mid-sentence and assumes you know all the previous information required to make sense of it. News stories tend to follow a narrative pattern that news consumers can understand and anticipate. In media and cultural studies, this is described as encoding and decoding texts. Journalists and media professionals have encoded information into news stories and news consumers have decoded them. At the encoding stage, journalists and media professionals apply news values to turn information into news.

Framing

The way a news story is created is described as **framing**. One way to understand this is to think about the way in which photographers ‘frame’ pictures. Obviously, when they look at a scene there are many angles and ingredients present, but by focusing on, and capturing, a particular aspect of the scene, they give it ‘framing’ and consequently represent a version of reality. You might even do this yourself when you choose what you post on social media: the way you chose to depict yourself through particular photos and postings represents a framing of your personality. In a similar way, journalists and media professionals processing information into news stories select a particular approach, or frame, which can be reflected in a headline or a lead (introduction), and used to decide what information to include and exclude, and what bits should be emphasised over others. Over time, this approach becomes explicitly or implicitly understood by news consumers, allowing

them to comprehend information in a particular way. Framing constructs a picture of reality but is perceived as a natural reflection of an event. However, new media technology that facilitates regular updating of stories and interaction means audiences can increasingly challenge this paradigm and create their own version of news—although we can argue that this still requires selection and rejection of material, and consequently amounts to a reframing of news.

Gatekeeping and agenda setting

As you've seen, journalists and media professionals turn information into news stories by a process of filtering and presenting data in a structured narrative form through the application of news values that they learn and refine through socialisation. This process determines that not all information is regarded as newsworthy; consequently, decisions are made about which elements of a story are culled and which are kept and how they are revealed. Hence, journalists and media professionals are described as being **gatekeepers**. Gatekeeping is cited as an important factor in setting the **news agenda**.

The news agenda operates on five key levels:

- 1 It influences what we talk about in general conversation as a result of consuming news.
- 2 It influences how we react to events and information.
- 3 It influences how stakeholders (people with an interest in a particular development) will react.
- 4 It influences how other journalists and media professionals produce subsequent information as news.
- 5 It can generate new content via interaction and feedback from audiences.

#Gatekeeper: A media professional, such as a subeditor, who decides which news stories or other types of information will be selected or rejected for public consumption.

#News agenda: The influence of news providers on the way both members of the public and people in power absorb and react to public events.

NEW VALUES IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL WORLD

Tiffin (1989) argues that news values also reflect audiences, formats and competition. As audiences change the way they consume news, as new formats develop and others become redundant, as competition for news and audiences increases, news values are affected.

In its 2012 report on the 'disrupted news universe', the Tow Center for Digital Journalism at Columbia University looked at the ways in which journalism was adapting to the post-industrial media world. *Post-Industrial Journalism: Adapting to the Present* (Anderson, Bell & Shirky 2012) analysed the shift from the traditional system of news production—including news culture and socialisation as we've discussed—to the new world of post-industrial journalism that centres on digital platforms and multiple inputs and outputs. The report looked at how this is affecting the way we obtain our news and how this impacts on the framing and reframing of stories.

Other critics argue the news is now so highly commodified and sensationalised that the pressure on media professionals to obtain an exclusive angle (and on news organisations to find alternative business models) is affecting the application of news values. The **commodification** of news means it is treated like any other good for sale, and so it is analysed on the basis of how much money it can generate and how much it costs to produce. As discussed in Chapter 3, investigative journalism can be time-consuming and expensive. While it can produce important and new

#Commodification: In the context of news, the view that news is a commodity that can be valued, and bought and sold like any other good in the market place, reflecting the globalisation and deregulation of news.

information, many media outlets are cutting back on funding it, instead opting for 'news' that is cheaper and quicker to obtain and publish. They are also increasingly relying on mass-produced wire copy and media releases, a practice known as **churnalism**. Allan (2005) says the commodification of news has seen corporate interests subtly influencing news content and values. This blurs the line between cross promotion, advertising and news, as we saw when the Seven Television Network's news programs, for example, reported the death of the fictional Mel Rafter from the popular *Packed to the Rafters* program (which screens on the Seven network). Mel died in a car accident when she went through a stop sign while looking at her mobile phone. In some news items, this was the hook to dress this event up as news—a warning to not use mobile phones while driving.

Fairclough (1995) argues these developments are further refined via the **conversationalisation** of news language; in other words, while most news is by nature public, much of it is consumed in private places or on private devices. Conversational news language helps to blur the line between news and entertainment, between checked and sourced news, and gossip. At the same time, the graphic revolution has led to the elevation of images above words and tabloidisation of news has enforced this. When Australian beauty therapist Schapelle Corby was sentenced to prison for drug smuggling in Bali in 2005, many newspapers and web pages simply carried the news with a large close-up photo of her face and two words: 'Twenty years'.

In the first phase of online journalism, large traditional media outlets simply transcribed their print or broadcast content onto webpages. Over recent years, however, they have incorporated online material into stories via hyperlinks, and most now solicit information including photos, videos and reports of events from other sources, including their audiences and consumers. This user-generated content is directly impacting on what we see, hear and read about. It's influencing the news agenda and adds to the speed in which stories develop. Content is also given a wider audience via consumers (re)distributing it via social networks like Twitter and Facebook. Professor Julian Disney (2015a), Chair of the Australian Press Council, highlights the changes and their benefits:

[Audiences] have much faster and cheaper access to a broader range of information and opinion. Space is often less constrained ... material can be corrected and updated more readily; and links improve [audiences'] access to related material. New voices and methods have been introduced, including through [audience] comment streams. Social media has enabled people to convey their knowledge and views more widely than around the barbecue.

Disney also highlights some of the challenges regarding privacy, accuracy of information and fairness—not just for regulatory organisations like the Press Council and for media professionals, but also for the wider public.

Shoemaker and Voss (2009) use the term 'audience gatekeepers' to describe the process by which consumers select, highlight, comment on and republish material from traditional media sources. Nolan (2003) argues that online journalism has involved a struggle to find a narrative form in a multilinear world. She argues traditional news and media professionals have been trying to work out how they can retain their established methods and core values in the changing media environment. In some cases this has seen the rise of the news blog, which has allowed journalists greater freedom to be opinionated and subjective; in other cases, it has seen the rise of new digital native media that operate on alternative models rather than established news ones; for example, CircaNews and BuzzFeed.



ANALYSE MULTILINEAR MEDIA

Consider how news values are applied in the multilinear media world. Access one of the newer online news sites such as BuzzFeed or Circanews. Analyse their content. Research the same online news outlets and read about their aims and work methods. How are these reflected in the content?

CONCLUSION

As developing new technology influences how news is gathered, produced and consumed, the debate about news values will continue. There will be ongoing discussion about what really influences the production of a news story. But at the end of the day, there is still an important and ongoing role for journalists and media professionals—whether they are working in established and traditional (sometimes described as ‘legacy’) news organisations, or in the new evolving digital native world—to bring order to the deluge of information flooding our lives. There is still a demand for trusted professionals to be curators of that information via news content. Which brings us back to the old French proverb, *plus ca change, plus c’est la meme chose*, which translated into English means *the more things change, the more they stay the same*.

Think again about how *you* decide whether information given to you can be defined as ‘news’. It doesn’t matter how you receive this information—whether it’s via a text message, social media, a favourite blog or in a conversation with a friend—you will decide on its newsworthiness by applying criteria that resemble the news values that journalists and media professionals use to decide what and how information becomes news.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- News values are criteria that the media apply to determine if and what information will be produced as news, including impact, proximity, prominence, human interest, novelty, conflict and currency.
- News values are not fixed. Instead they are relative and fluid and are a model for assessing newsworthiness and constructing stories.
- News values are learned and refined through the socialisation of journalists and media professionals embedded into a news culture.
- The way in which news professionals express ideas in written and spoken language, including their evaluation of such elements as newsworthiness, is called news discourse.
- Splurge journalism is the up-to-the-minute, immediate saturation coverage of major events (which are sometimes called media events).
- Framing is the process of selecting and rejecting information when constructing a news story. It involves placing emphasis on a particular aspect or angle. It also reflects the respective approach of individual media professionals and organisations and provides context for consumers.
- ‘Gatekeeping’ describes the way in which we pick up on some pieces of information, and not on others. Traditionally in the news process, this was the province of media professionals, but in the digital world, audiences also gatekeep by selecting, highlighting, commenting on and republishing material from traditional media sources via new and social media.
- The news agenda can influence how we react after consuming news and subsequent coverage of developments.
- The commodification of news regards news as a commodity that can be valued, bought and sold like any other good in the market place; it reflects the globalisation and deregulation of news.
- ‘Churnalism’ is a term to describe the way media rely on media releases, public relations and wire copy for most content.
- The conversationalisation of news is the way news language is structured to mirror ordinary conversation, blurring the boundary between the public and private and reflecting the fact that while most news is public in nature, much of it (especially broadcast and online news) is consumed in private domains like lounge rooms.
- In the post-industrial media world, news isn’t always the result of a hierarchical process, but can be structured along several lines, often facilitated by the inclusion of hyperlinks online allowing different angles and voices in the coverage.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are news values? List the key criteria outlined in the chapter.
- 2 Describe how journalists and media professionals use them to sift through information when crafting news stories.

- 3 The process of choosing some pieces of information and rejecting others is called gatekeeping. What is the difference between media gatekeepers and audience gatekeepers?
- 4 How would you describe framing when it comes to putting together a story?
- 5 How is online content different from news traditionally published in a daily newspaper?
- 6 Review the news values outlined in this chapter. Go to one of your favourite news publications—it can be a newspaper, a broadcast news bulletin or an online news site. Make a note of the main stories. Why are these newsworthy? Use the news values to see if you can justify why your particular news outlet has published the stories as news.
- 7 Choose a major story from a news outlet. Compare how other media cover the same story. Include at least one overseas media outlet. How is the coverage different, if it is at all? Why do you think that is the case? Is the story even covered? List some of those reasons based on what you've read in the chapter.

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13

BROADCAST NEWS: KEEP IT SIMPLE

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

One of the defining characteristics of the broadcast media is its immediacy: its drive to be on the spot and first with the sound and pictures from wherever news is breaking. This imperative places pressure on broadcast journalists to work quickly, so that they do not fall behind the story. The two dominant broadcast media, radio and television, continue to bring the news almost instantly to a mass audience and millions of people rely upon them for their news. They have been fundamentally challenged by social media, particularly Twitter, which now breaks news fastest. But people still turn to radio and television to see and hear what is going on—to obtain more detailed coverage of events. While radio and television have some obvious differences, they have more in common with each other than they do with print. This chapter is most concerned with writing broadcast news, rather than the specific technicalities of, for example, television visuals or radio audio editing. The first thing, and often the hardest thing, that must be mastered in broadcast media is the writing style. This chapter will help you through that process.

In this chapter we look at:

- what broadcast news is
- the transformation of print style to broadcast style
- the notion of signposting
- good broadcast journalism practice, including pacing, scripting and style.

WHAT IS BROADCAST NEWS?

On radio, brief broadcast news items are usually packaged into regular hourly news bulletins. While important breaking stories may go to air at any time, the vast majority of radio news is scheduled into these regular bulletins. Television has its equivalents, usually in the form of the major early evening news shows—generally of a half-hour’s duration—and shorter news updates at various times during the day and evening. An army of reporters works around the clock in broadcast media newsrooms creating carefully packaged news vignettes that can be slotted into bulletins and news updates. The range of news covered tends to be more restricted than you will find in a newspaper, mostly because of time constraints, but also because of the nature of the media involved: undertaking this work successfully involves a broad range of reporting, writing and technical skills, but most critically, an appreciation of the need for speed.

One of the addictive aspects about both radio and television for the journalist is the magic inherent in seeing and hearing one’s story on the air, often quite soon after the outline of the story has first formed in your mind. Radio is often somewhat faster than television in getting material to air, but both media are considerably faster than print. Of course, the fastest of all is live broadcast work, which has its own pressures and rewards. This chapter is most concerned with the work of the broadcast reporter who writes scripts and prepares recorded packages for news bulletins.

Broadcast reporters must have robust writing skills and a poised manner. They must be able to produce lots of super-brief and correct prose in ridiculously tight timeframes. Professional radio journalist often have to produce eight to ten stories in one eight-hour shift; the television journalist produces fewer due to the greater technical requirements, such as filming and video editing, which are more time-consuming than audio recording and editing. Another advantage for radio journalists is that they can obtain their raw materials from broadcast-quality telephone interviews. A journalist may certainly get out into the field to interview someone—for example, at a protest rally or a bushfire—but a lot of interviewing for radio is carried out by telephone. By contrast, a television reporter will usually be required to go out with a crew to get footage of various kinds before heading back to the studio to create a script and edit the story.

HELPFUL QUALITIES IN A BROADCAST JOURNALIST

All news journalists, no matter which medium they work in, must show impartiality, a nose for news, insatiable curiosity and a sense of ethics. In the broadcast media it also helps to have the following characteristics:

- grace under pressure
- the ability to think on your feet



- a sense of urgency
- large reserves of energy
- an ability to switch quickly between different topics
- an affinity with technology
- the talent to conceptualise a broadcast story as an audio and/or video package
- a capacity for heightened and critical use of one's ears (for radio) and eyes (for television) to ensure that the audio and visuals work.

One of the things that sets broadcast news apart from print is its writing style. You have to get used to extreme brevity, and many reporters new to electronic media struggle with this. Writing like this means having a news sense so finely honed that you can pick the obvious broadcast news angle immediately, and write about it in a brief but still engaging and conversational way. You can't elaborate much in broadcast. You have to find the essential feature of the story and go with that, leaving out anything extraneous.

Broadcast journalists should always be good writers, within the specific broadcast idiom. There are several features that broadcast news shares with other forms of news writing. The most important three are:

- accuracy
- clarity
- completeness.

Accuracy requires solid information, carefully checked and attributed. Clarity requires clear, grammatically and stylistically correct English, containing nothing that has listeners scratching their heads, particularly unexplained technical terms. Completeness means answering the standard Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why? and How? questions (see Chapter 14) that must be included in your stories, as they must be in other forms of journalism.

PRINT VERSUS BROADCAST WRITING

Often a journalist starts in print journalism, and then moves over to the electronic media. Similarly, most journalism courses at university begin by teaching print before moving to broadcast. When you make this transition, one of the most difficult things you have to do is change your writing style.

You have to pare things down so much that it sometimes seems that there is not much left at all. You must be able to say what the story is about, with a minimum of words conveying a maximum of information. Your vocabulary and sentence structure have to become not merely simple but also (to some people, at least) simplistic. Keep in mind that most radio news stories are generally between 30 and 60 seconds long, and television news stories only a little longer, maybe as much as 120 seconds.

At three words a second (see 'Pacing' below), your radio story may contain only 90 or 180 words, and your television story no more than 360 words (probably fewer, because you let the pictures do some of the talking). What you write must still be informative and go to the heart of the matter. It must also capture and keep the attention of the listener. Perhaps your biggest challenge will be to ensure that you encapsulate the news comprehensively in as few words as possible.

Your language should be simple and the sentences should (as much as possible) be short. Avoid overly complex sentences with more than two clauses; likewise, avoid unusual vocabulary. Listeners will find it difficult to follow convoluted sentences with lots of long words. Even sentences that would be perfectly acceptable in the print media may be too much for a broadcast audience to take in. This is the consequence of the two quite different forms of sensory perception involved in reading and listening. Consider the following print media lead:

Studies on the impact and usefulness of a method to extract coconut oil for use as a fuel alternative in South Pacific villages will get underway this year in Fiji, under a grant allocated by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

This is acceptable as a print story lead, and this example comes from a real print news story. But it will not do as a broadcast story lead, which you will notice if you read it out loud.

To begin with, the words 'Studies on the impact' do not set the context sufficiently for the radio listener, so this is not a good signpost (discussed below). Also, it comes to a total of forty words, which is a feasible lead paragraph for a broadsheet newspaper, but too much for radio, where fewer than twenty-five words per sentence is more the norm. Saying a long sentence with one breath is difficult, which is why broadcast sentences are kept short: the person speaking the script has to sound natural and not strained.

This is how we might rewrite the above lead for broadcast:

Villages in the South Pacific may be able to use coconut oil as fuel, following a study this year in Fiji.

This lead is now twenty-one words. You would add in the detail about the Australian Research Council in the next sentence, or in the voiceover. Note that, in this radio version, you set the context by beginning with 'Villages in the South Pacific', so the listener can get ready for a story on that subject. Listeners don't need to think back to the crucial bit of information that was relayed to them before they were mentally prepared for it. In a sense, you begin your lead with information that is not the most crucial part of the opening paragraph. The scene-setting information leads the listener to the crucial information.

The same story packaged for television not only would have a brief introduction, but also relevant visual images that serve as a powerful signpost to complement the words.

A VARIETY OF NEWS OUTLETS

The mainstream electronic media outlets in Australia all have significant stylistic differences. The ABC has a different news agenda and house style from most of the commercial radio and television stations. The advent of community radio introduced new voices to electronic media news; again, each station has its own way of doing news. Make a point of listening critically to the different electronic news outlets and note the differences and the similarities. As an exercise, listen intently for how different electronic media outlets use verbs, the words that power sentences. See if you can detect any significant differences between the ABC and commercial outlets. (See Chapter 14 for a discussion of the role of verbs.)



Radio demands that its reporters harness the fleeting nature of the medium without being defeated by it. If you don't capture the listener the first time around in your radio script, you have probably lost that person forever. This is a powerful difference from the way print media works; if a newspaper reader does not understand something in print, they can read the story again until the meaning is clear. Radio news is ephemeral, so this is not the case. On television, there are pictures to assist the viewer get the meaning, and pictures are very powerful for creating meaning in people's minds—on radio, you are on your own.

When people listen to the radio they are usually doing something else at the same time. Newspapers tend to engage their readers' attention fully, and this is also the case, perhaps to a lesser degree, with television. Radio has to compete for listener attention with many other distractions, such as traffic, children, the work on your computer or the dinner you are cooking.

Those writing for radio must always remember that if a story is not written well enough to be understood the first time, then it's all over. At best, the listener may catch it again in the next bulletin, but only if it is repeated, and this is not always the case.

LISTEN OBSESSIVELY

If you aspire to be a broadcast journalist, you must listen constantly to the sort of material that you might one day be creating. If you aim to be an ABC radio reporter, for example, you must consume the news and current affairs programs on the ABC obsessively. When you start listening to them like a professional does, and not just a casual listener, you will hear not just the story but the nuts and bolts—the language use, the variety of sounds and voices, the mechanics of scripting—as well. When you hear the machinery then you will understand it better, and start to think about how you can work in the broadcast environment.

Writing briefly requires greater skill than writing at length. Precision of language is supremely important in a broadcast news bulletin. Well thought out, clear language is the first requisite, so aim to use language in such a way that the listener does not have to labour to understand; it must sound natural and conversational. The words must be easy to say, so that you don't stumble when recording your voiceovers, and the newsreader doesn't stumble when reading live. While ruthlessly paring back vocabulary can seem authoritarian and even rather Orwellian, there is good reason to select from a small range of short and easy-to-say words, rather than trying to demonstrate a fancy vocabulary and tripping up yourself and the newsreader in the process.

Before recording your voiceovers, read your scripts out loud to yourself (nearly all broadcast journalists do this). Reading aloud is a good way of picking up problems of delivery that are not apparent on the page. The words on the page may look okay, but only by saying a sentence out loud will you find, for example, a jarring run of alliteration that sounds silly when spoken. In fact, the last phrase of that last sentence probably would sound silly because of a string of words beginning with 's'.

Broadcast journalists conveying the news of the hour should write as if speaking directly to their audience. You are telling a story, not writing text. Avoid being too formal and artificial, but don't jar your listeners by being too casual and sloppy.

BE BRIEF, BUT BE CAREFUL

When stories are truncated for electronic media, it's important that they retain their meaning. Brevity serves no purpose if clarity is lost. If the story takes too many words to tell, that's poor broadcast writing, but if it takes so few that it fails to convey meaning, then you might as well not bother.

To break down the differences to an essence: radio is confined within the limits of sound alone. Sound and silence are the only things you have to work with. As long as you keep in mind that your work is going to be heard, and not read, then you will be able to conceptualise, and then implement this approach. On television you are also writing words that are to be spoken, but in addition they must match and complement (not duplicate or clash with) the visual images.

SIGNPOSTING

In the world of radio, the ear can only take in so much at a time—and on the radio, sounds just keep coming at you. Radio journalists must learn to give their listeners clues by using what are known as **signposts**, which are simply ways of letting your listeners know the context of the story they are about to hear. They can take various forms, and while they are also useful in television, they are most useful in radio.

SIGNPOSTS IN YOUR SCRIPTS


Signposts simply give context in radio. They prepare your listeners for what you are about to say, remind listeners of what has already been said, or provide a **segue** between different contexts.

For instance, a journalist might begin her story with, 'Astrophysicists studying the beginnings of the universe ...'. Beginning sentences such as this immediately creates a context for what is to come, so the listener can get ready for the content of the story. In this case, listeners will know that the story is going to concern astrophysics so they can mentally prepare for the new information. The second half of the sentence will contain the news: '... have confirmed a key aspect of the Big Bang theory'. Turning it around into a non-signposted story ['A key aspect of the Big Bang theory ...'] does not provide enough information to prepare a listener for a story on astrophysics.


You should always signpost your radio stories. This often means that you say who is involved in the action before you say what the action is. Again, in the above example, you have broadly identified the 'who'—astrophysicists—before providing the news. The action will be the main point of the story, but the 'who' will often set the scene. If the 'who' of the story is not sufficiently clear in context, then the 'where'—such as 'in Canberra' or 'in Iraq'—may be able to do the job.

The kind of signposts you might use at the end of a story or between stories might involve restating who has just been speaking (in actuality or **voiceover**); for example, 'Meanwhile, in Washington, President Barack Obama says ...'.

The essential point to observe in writing for radio is that listeners cannot go back to check what they have missed or forgotten. You have to keep reminding them where you are up to, but do it in a way that is not needlessly and annoyingly repetitive.



#Signposts: Words and sentence structures that show listeners, readers or viewers the context of a story and/or the way in which they should react to it, for example, broadcast news journalists structure their lead stories in such a way as to provide context for the story first before revealing the new thing that has happened.



#Segue: Pronounced *seg-way*; the transition between elements of a broadcast story or show, including the 'throw' that the news reader uses to introduce a pre-recorded package.

#Voiceover: Also *voicer* or *VO*; the recorded voice of the reporter explaining an aspect of the story.

In broadcast, because you are telling a story rather than writing for the constraints of newspaper layout, you are not confined to the strict inverted pyramid construction (discussed in Chapter 15). Telling is more like a conversation, and the inverted pyramid construction in this context could be rather unnatural. Your aim is to tell a story with such clarity that the listener does not have any questions still to ask at the end. Set the scene of every story you write before you say what the news thing is. All stories have a context. Here is a real example from the ABC:

A United Nations agency warns that two-thirds of the world's population will not have enough water within twenty years.

Note that the 'who'—in this case 'a United Nations agency'—is established first, before the main point of the story. In this way the listener is prepared for the news itself, and has a better chance of being able to absorb it efficiently. A 'who' signpost, as this example shows, does not have to be a person: it can be an organisation of some kind. It can also be a description of a person. For example, a real radio story about a potential hijacker started like this:

A Melbourne man who tried to hijack and crash a Qantas plane last year has been found not guilty due to mental impairment.

This is a 'who' description that most listeners will recognise even if they don't know the man's name.

SOME POSSIBLE ELEMENTS OF A BROADCAST SCRIPT

While scripting styles can vary enormously, and even the terminology is sometimes used differently in different settings, some things are common to broadcast scripts. These include the following terms:

- **intro or announcer read:** the introductory part of the story, usually read live by the newsreader, and scripted by the reporter
- **throw:** a brief line introducing the person who is about to speak, often the reporter whose voiceover is about to be played
- **grab:** an excerpt of your interview with the talent [or source]
- **actuality:** sound gathered by a reporter on location or by telephone; it usually refers to an interview with talent and in some newsrooms is used interchangeably with grab
- **outro or back announce:** the announcement made by the live announcer or newsreader after the packaged part of the script is finished
- **timing:** the times allowed in the script for various sound elements: an overall timing for the whole package, and a timing for the pre-recorded part of the package; estimates of how long it will take for the live announcer to say the intro and outro are worked out using the three-words-per-second standard
- **natsound:** natural sound, recorded on location

So signposts signal to listeners what the story will be about and get them mentally prepared for what is to come. Once you have written your lead, you then take the listener through the rest of the story in the most logical and natural manner possible, repeating key words if necessary to maintain the context.

Intro or announcer read: The introductory part of an electronic media story, usually read live by the newsreader, and scripted by the reporter.

Throw: A brief line introducing the person who is about to speak, often the reporter whose voiceover is about to be played.

Grab: An excerpt of a journalist's interview with the talent (or source).

#Actuality: Location sound, which may sometimes be an interview with talent, and in some newsrooms is used interchangeably with 'grab'.

#Outro or back announce: The announcement made by the live announcer or newsreader after the packaged part of an electronic media script has finished.

#Timing: The times allowed in the script for various sound elements: an overall timing for the whole package, and a timing for the pre-recorded part of the package.

#Natsound: Natural sound, recorded on location.

GOOD BROADCAST JOURNALISM PRACTICE

All journalism has conventions and stylistic considerations that form part of the journalist's professional practice (see Chapter 15). Broadcast journalism has some overlap with print convention and style, but quite a few differences and additional features as well. One of these involves the way broadcast journalists attribute information. In broadcast stories, you attribute facts and opinions at all times, as you would in print, but put the attribution first, as in 'Carol Smith says ...' It is not natural speech for 'she said' to be tacked on to the end of a sentence, even though that is the print convention. Always put the name of the speaker first.

Note that you will generally use present tense rather than past, as long as it sounds natural. You are not obliged to put your news story into the past tense as (often) you are with print news, though sometimes past tense is the only way to make a story sound natural. If you have to use past tense, you still must take care that your story doesn't sound out of date. Instead of writing, for example, 'Federal parliament last night voted to end refugee detention', a more signposted version might be, 'Detention of refugees will end following a vote in Federal parliament'. Here the verb is 'will end', which is in the future tense.

Pacing

Pacing your stories correctly can help make your broadcast writing easy for the listener to comprehend. For most people, information is more efficiently absorbed by the eye than the ear. The eye can take in 250 words a minute or more. But if you speak that quickly, no one will understand you, because the ear doesn't work that quickly.

News presenters and experienced reporters speak at about three words a second, or about 180 words a minute. If you go much slower than that it sounds rather dull and maybe even rather patronising. If you go much faster it becomes difficult to understand.

When you time your story, it will be done on the assumption that both you and the newsreader will hit the mark fairly closely. Broadcast news bulletins often operate within very tight time constraints, and you simply can't run over by thirty seconds. If a radio or television bulletin were to do that on any station, it would probably be cut off as the next program kicked in. You should get into the habit of providing timings for all your stories.

#Pacing: The speed at which a reporter, newsreader or presenter speaks.

Fluency

Fluency—that is, smooth and articulate spoken expression—is important in broadcast, and all aspiring broadcast journalists should nurture their ability to speak without sounding nervous, hesitant or undisciplined. If you are doing a live stand-up from the scene of a big story, you can't waste time and irritate listeners with 'ums' and 'ers'. Fluency has to become your natural state. Your verbal fluency can be improved by doing some ad-libbing exercises, making a conscious effort to eliminate any problems you might have conveying information by voice.

#Fluency: Smooth and articulate spoken expression.

PACING AND FLUENCY EXERCISES

Pacing

Practise reading as close to the professional rate as possible by preparing a story of exactly 180 words and recording it in exactly one minute. You may need to try a few times before you get it just right.

Fluency

Go outside with a recording device and microphone and, taking exactly one minute, describe what you can see without a single 'um', 'err', 'like', 'you know' or long pause. Listen back to your recording, critiquing it for flow, confidence and broadcast quality.

Broadcast scripts

Your written story is known in radio and television as a script. The technical differences between radio and television mean that the two types of script are set out differently. Different stations employ different styles as well, so a truly standard format does not exist. There are, however, elements you will find in all broadcast scripts, even if they are set out differently.

Your script will begin with words to be spoken by the announcer, presenter or newsreader. Note that reporters are responsible for scripting all parts of the story, including those that they are not themselves going to record or say live.

The intro (or announcer-read) part of the script may contain one short lead paragraph (and possibly more), before throwing to voiceover and/or actuality or grab. These introductory statements are intended to be read by the newsreader or presenter. Each paragraph normally will be no more than about 25 words.

Every news script you write for either radio or television must have a reader intro: there is no other way for your script to have context within the news bulletin unless you provide something for the live announcer to say before playing the rest of the story.

Every script will also contain other sound elements, pre-recorded and ready to be played in the bulletin. It is important to ensure that the newsreader or the news producer knows exactly how long the recording will run, so that she is ready to begin speaking live again at the end. Therefore, all of your written scripts will contain timings. Exactly what gets timed (all parts of the package separately or just the recorded part/s) and how it is expressed (in seconds, or in minutes and seconds) varies depending upon the style of the station for which you are working.

Voiceovers are vital on radio, because they add life and interest to a story; having a different voice from that of the newsreader offers the variation that a bulletin needs to keep the attention of the listeners. They are also essential, on both radio and television, for explaining the details of the story—a task that generally can't be done just by using grabs from talent.

Every word of a voiceover, whether recorded at the scene or in the studio, should be thought out carefully for maximum impact, accuracy and brevity, and then spoken with equal care. Write VO's to suit your own way of speaking, so that they sound natural. Everyone has words that he cannot say with ease, and you need to know what your own bogey words are. For some, they might be words such as 'meteorology' or 'nuclear', and others seemingly simple ones like 'familiar' or 'sentiment'. If you have difficulty getting your tongue around particular words or sentence constructions, then rewrite that part of the voiceover to make it right for you. Your delivery should be effortless.

Script: In electronic news media, the written part of a radio or television story.



PRONUNCIATION AND PHONETICS

One of the most difficult aspects of perfecting a broadcast technique is dealing with the issue of pronunciation. The English language is large, complicated, various and (sometimes) illogical, so it is difficult always to know exactly how to say certain words. To deal with this ongoing challenge, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation has a body known as the Standing Committee on Spoken English (SCOSE), which assesses and adjudicates upon issues of pronunciation and advises broadcasters on an agreed correct version.

While we can usually agree on how to spell words, we can't always agree on how to say things. The word 'manufacturing', for example, is commonly rendered as 'manner-facturing', but is this correct and acceptable? Many people would say it is not: to sound correct and pleasing to the ear, it should be spoken as 'man-YOU-facturing'. There are many other examples. Also, as reporter it is your responsibility to find out the correct pronunciation of unfamiliar names. Not correctly pronouncing the name of a person or a place betrays ignorance, which leads to doubts over credibility. Also, getting people's names wrong is not only a great insult but just plain sloppy. Most people don't give this issue a thought, but in the broadcast media it is necessary to find a pronunciation for many different words and names that will be understandable and will not cause offence or irritation.

Phonetic spelling

Broadcast journalists often insert into their written scripts the phonetic spelling of difficult or unfamiliar words. A linguist would not recognise it as phonetic at all, but rather a 'sounding out' of the syllables of a word so that it can be easily said without stumbling. If, for example, you are referring to the French writer Albert Camus you would provide, inside square brackets, the correct pronunciation. This is how it might appear: 'Author of the famous novel, *The Plague*, Albert Camus [CA-MOO]'

As you will discover, the process of packaging radio news stories is an activity that makes radio news rather different from television. Sometimes, with quite minimal training, radio journalists are expected to edit audio (either on a computer or on a recording device) and create material that will be broadcast. On television, various other people, such as the camera crew and video editor, are involved in the creation of a news story, but in radio often it is just up to you.

Writing in simple broadcast style

Broadcast writing is quite an art form, and deceptively simple. Your keyword here must be clarity, since the audience must not experience any doubt about the information you are conveying. One way of achieving clarity is to minimise the number of facts you try to cram into one sentence. There is no rigid rule here, but in general each sentence should contain one fact only—or, at a pinch, two. Do not try to fit too much into each sentence or it will sound too complicated and the listener will give up.

Go easy on adverbs and adjectives; they add to the clutter and often are superfluous. Get rid of any words that are likely to annoy or confuse your listeners, whether because they are obscure or

just long and pretentious. Stick to everyday, straightforward English—although keep in mind that it is jarring to use slang or folksy expressions.

When you place numbers and initials in your story, write them as you would want them spoken by the newsreader. Don't write '1,200,000', because it may be difficult for the newsreader to think quickly enough to convert this to normal speech. Write 'one-million-two-hundred-thousand' in the body of your story. Join the elements together with a hyphen. Use precise figures only when they are important to the story; otherwise round the numbers out. For instance, 'four-million-nine hundred-and-ninety-eight-thousand' in most cases could be rounded off to 'about five million'. Because you need to tally up the words in each story to work out your timings, it is important to write out the numbers as words so that they can form part of the overall word count.

Try not to use too many initials in your story, because they may trip up the newsreader. For instance, the US may come out on air as 'us', so it might be better to spell out the United States, or else use America if you are sure that your audience will get your meaning. If you are talking about dollars, write 'three-thousand-dollars'; don't use a dollar sign. Likewise, don't use the percentage symbol ('%'); write out the words ('per cent').

Use punctuation properly in your stories, because punctuation is the written expression of natural pauses in speech, and as such will help the newsreader to pace the reading of the story correctly. Also, if you are doing a voiceover of your own story, correct punctuation will help you to get it right in the heat of the moment. Therefore, use a comma where there should be a very brief pause in a sentence. A dash may indicate the sort of abrupt pause that comes with a change of intonation, as when inserting a clause or a phrase that need not be there for the rest of the sentence to make sense. For instance, you could say, 'The science minister said the CSIRO—a statutory authority—was funded on a three yearly basis'.

You should avoid direct quotes in your broadcast scripts, because it is hard to convey them by reading. You or the newsreader can make elaborate attempts to show by intonation that what you are saying is a direct quote, but really you may as well just run some actuality of the person concerned speaking rather than try to quote them directly in your script. On television, you may be able to put direct quotes onto graphics and show the viewer what has been said, but obviously that is not an option on radio.

Intros can be as short as one sentence, but should be rarely more than three sentences. The throw is just a few words: 'Jane Brown reports ...' or 'John Peters reports from Bowen ...', or, for variation, 'As Karen Jones reports, the bushfire appears to be out of control ...'.

The voice report that follows should not repeat what has just been said in the intro, but rather should expand on the theme and introduce new information, also adding the authentic information and the atmosphere that can only be obtained at the scene of an event. Remember: the voiceover must follow logically from the throw, otherwise you will actually disorient your listeners and therefore lose their attention. Signpost between sections of script and at the end by writing an outro or back announce, which reminds listeners of who was just speaking.

In both radio and television scripts, you should be able to produce efficient, brief and stylistically correct sentences that clearly identify the key point of the story up front and use signposting to lead the listener/viewer through the facts needed for understanding the story. Your script has to be written quickly, often in the station car returning from the recording location.



KEY MESSAGES FOR BROADCAST WRITING

- Aim for short, sharp, informative sentences that don't exceed 25 words.
- Telegraph your intentions at the start of your story, and at other key points, by using signposting.
- Write out all elements of your script, including the voiceover and transcript of the grab.
- Time both the recorded part and the entire script, keeping in mind the standard three words per second.
- Don't write anything that is hard to say.
- Practise saying your words aloud.
- Be mindful of the fact that you will have between 90 and 360 words (depending on whether you are writing for radio or television) to tell the entire story, from start to finish.
- Pare back adverbs and adjectives.
- Don't use complex, convoluted sentences.
- Make every word count.

CONCLUSION

The best broadcast journalists are those who don't have to strain to write a script. A broadcast newsroom is a fast-paced environment, where robust generic skills are expected. Have a journalistic vocabulary at your disposal, made up of short, sharp and strong words, and a news sense that can quickly pick out the main point of the story. You won't have the capacity in broadcast news to go into depth, but what you do choose to include must provide the audience with the essential facts in a style that aids rapid understanding. To cope with the pace, and indeed to even get a job in the first place, you have to have impeccable generic skills. Often the process of getting a job in the industry is demanding, and you will have to demonstrate that you are a confident, well-spoken and poised individual who can discern a news angle and come up with a perfectly balanced and nicely written script. Your work must display a sophisticated knowledge base as well as easy-to-follow, simple English and correct broadcast style. Do these things, and you are on the way to the top of one of the world's great professions.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Broadcast journalism is defined by its immediacy, and this places pressure on broadcast journalists to work quickly, so that they do not fall behind the story.
- Broadcast reporters must have robust writing skills and a poised manner, and be able to produce lots of brief and correct prose in tight timeframes.
- One of the things that sets broadcast news apart from print is its extremely brief writing style.
- When writing a broadcast news script, you must be able to say what the story is about with a minimum of words conveying maximum information.
- Your language should be simple and the sentences should (as much as possible) be short. Avoid overly complex sentences and unusual vocabulary.
- If a story is not written well enough to be understood the first time, then the chance to inform the audience may have been lost.
- Radio journalists give their listeners clues by using signposts, which are simply ways of letting your listeners know the context of the story they are about to hear.
- Attribute facts and opinions at all times, and put the attribution first, as in ‘Carol Smith says ...’.
- You will generally use present tense rather than past tense, as long as it sounds natural.
- News presenters and experienced reporters speak at about three words a second, or about 180 words a minute, and prepare their scripts based upon this pacing.
- Broadcast journalists aim for fluency, smooth and articulate spoken expression. Nurture your ability to speak without sounding nervous, hesitant or undisciplined.
- Strive to produce efficient, brief and stylistically correct sentences that clearly identify the key point of the story up front, and use signposting to lead the listener/viewer through the facts needed for understanding the story.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the main constraints of writing for the electronic media?
- 2 Why do electronic media journalists have to be quick on their feet?
- 3 What is ‘signposting’ and why is it important?
- 4 How do broadcast journalists write numbers in their scripts?
- 5 How should you deal with understanding how to pronounce unfamiliar words or names?
- 6 Create an annotated radio diary. Record (or download), describe and analyse two radio news bulletins and two radio current affairs shows. Choose news bulletins and current affairs shows that are broadcast on the same day if possible, but at least in the same week. Suitable current affairs programs would be, for example, *AM*, *PM* or *The World Today* on ABC Radio National. Prepare a written commentary (approximately 400 words for each recording), describing its content briefly

and analysing its approach to the news and issues of the day. Apart from the content, also note the following:

- the order in which stories were placed
- whether stories used actuality, voiceover and/or natsound
- how the current affairs related to the news agenda of that week
- how the news stories differed in structure from the current affairs pieces (it will be helpful to note the length of each item as a possible distinguishing characteristic)
- whether there were any 'soft' or 'light' items featured, and, if so, where in the bulletin or show?

Also note if there was anything that you would have done differently had you been responsible for putting these programs together. Listen critically and write about what you think of the voices of the news reader/presenter and the reporters—do they have clear and effective radio voices? Note any other issues that you feel apply to your selection of news and current affairs.

- 7 Prepare a script for a 50-second radio news package. Apply a strict 50-second limit to the entire package, from the part read by the news reader to the throw, voiceover, grab and back announce. Challenge yourself to stick strictly to the time limit, keeping in mind the ideal pacing of three words per second. Interview talent (refer to Tools 1 for tips on broadcast interviews), select a suitable grab and write the rest of the script using the information provided in this chapter.

FURTHER READING

Phillips, G. & Lindgren, M. (2006). *Australian Broadcast Journalism* (2nd edn). Melbourne: Oxford University Press.

WEBSITES

Australian Broadcasting Corporation: www.abc.net.au

14

THE ELEMENTS OF WRITING

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

As an aspiring writer, you should understand the foundations of our language, whether you plan to be a journalist, scriptwriter, public relations practitioner or a producer. As your career progresses you may well subvert everything you learn here, but only people who understand the rules can break them and not compromise their ability to convey meaning. The theme throughout this chapter is the need to analyse and hone your own writing to make it grammatically correct. This theme will be further developed in Chapter 15 ('Subediting, News Language and Convention'), which will examine professional style and convention. English grammar is a large subject, and not all of it is covered here. This chapter provides an overview of the key points that the educated writer should know.

In this chapter we look at:

- why journalists and other media professionals need to understand grammar
- the nature of grammar and why we need it
- recognising important parts of speech and sentence structures
- identifying incorrect grammar and correcting it
- understanding some basic principles of correct punctuation.

COMPLAINING CORRECTLY

Most people who rail in various public forums against the imposition of grammatical rules do so in impeccably correct English—to ensure that the rest of us clearly understand their meaning. Even people who claim not to like the rules of grammar inevitably must use them to make a point against grammar.

WHAT DOES GRAMMAR HAVE TO DO WITH JOURNALISM AND THE MEDIA?

Language is a clever, intricate machine that can run smoothly and get you where you want to go without breaking down. Or it can splutter and cough and sound wonky and get you nowhere. In this chapter we are going to pare the language back, take it apart and see how it operates. We need to understand it at its most basic level before we put it back together. People can write without ever understanding the inner workings of the engine of language. But the elite professional writer needs to have control over language that only technical knowledge can provide. This knowledge allows professional communicators to write not just with correctness but also with grace, concision and economy. The best professional writers are the guardians of the language and that role requires technical expertise.

Expanding on the car analogy may help. Most people who drive cars have no idea what goes on under the bonnet and don't want to know. This ignorance is not helpful, though, if you want to run your car at its best and develop it into a performance vehicle. To do that, you have to understand your car's mechanics. Professional writing is the same. To be a reader you don't necessarily need to understand the technicalities of **grammar** and usage. To be a writer—to be a good writer anyway—you have a responsibility to know your way around the intricacies of the language so that you can use it as a precision instrument. You must learn correct grammar, punctuation and word usage to have complete control over your writing. You may find that when you work in a communication profession there will be some flexibility in the application of grammatical rules, but it is essential that you know those rules first before you attempt to vary them. Grammar is an important tool (though not the only one) for ensuring that your message can always be understood without delay or difficulty.

Critics often point out that there was never a 'golden age' of English usage—that harking back to an earlier time of more correct English to the present day is delusional. While it is self-evidently true that universal correct English usage has never existed, it is equally true that there is a world of difference between the written work of those who take language use seriously and those who are untrained or uncaring. A workable standard for aspiring professional writers is to observe the work of the best writers in English and attempt to emulate them. Because there is no arbiter of correct English, this is really the only way to measure one's own usage. Find an excellent exponent of journalistic English (you might choose the great Australian writer Helen Garner, for example, or the expat Australian Clive James) and make that writer's work your own standard. This suggests that reading great journalistic work is essential; in fact, it can be inspiring as well as instructive,

#Grammar: The rules of the relationship that words have to one another in a sentence.



making it doubly useful. Read this material mindfully, observing how the writer has achieved his or her purpose using the language tools at their disposal. Learning from great writers makes your own work better over time.

George Orwell

One of the greatest writers in English, George Orwell, famously said, 'Good prose is like a window pane'. He meant by this that clarity is the prime requirement of prose writing. Good writing helps people to see concepts, ideas and actions clearly. One of the most important tools for achieving clarity is grammar. Grammar is not an end in itself but a means by which you can make yourselves better understood. In any communication activity, aim for clarity. All prospective journalists should read Orwell's essay on writing, 'Politics and the English Language' (Orwell 1946), which uses strong, clear English to explain why strong, clear English is needed. To quote from the essay, 'Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble'. Here are Orwell's timeless hints for great writing:

- 1 Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech that you are used to seeing in print.
- 2 Never use a long word when a short word will do.
- 3 If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
- 4 Never use the passive when you can use the active.
- 5 Never use a foreign phrase, scientific word or jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- 6 Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

WHAT IS GRAMMAR, AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?

Grammar has come to mean the description of the relationship words have with one another in a sentence. Although for centuries the word 'grammar' specifically related to ancient Greek and Latin, grammatical analysis is possible for all the languages of the world. English owes much to Greek and Latin, and many of the grammatical forms of ancient times apply today. More modern concepts of grammar have evolved too, and these have challenged some of the tenets of traditional grammar. But it remains true that traditional grammar is helpful to know, particularly for the student of writing. Understanding grammar and applying correct grammar consistently in your written work indicates professionalism. Good grammar is not pedantry; it is a courtesy to your reader and a sign of true professionalism.

Language is our dominant form of communication, and humans need to be able to speak and write using a set of rules common to everyone, so that we can all understand each other. Grammar provides the rules that enable us to express our inner thoughts to the external world in a cogent and consistent manner. If you use grammar correctly, your reader will be able to process the

information you have provided without having to spend much time trying to decipher what you mean. Ungrammatical, unstructured writing invariably is hard to read, and it puts an unnecessary burden on the reader. In a profession devoted to efficient, rapid communication, being difficult to read and understand is not an option. In most cases, you will need to adopt ‘Standard English’ for your media work (see the box ‘Which English?’ later in this chapter).

#Standard English: The dominant form of English in the public sphere; the form of English considered ‘correct’ in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

The elements of English: nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs

In English, nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs make up the largest part of the vocabulary. They are often called the **content words** of a language, and in English new ones are added frequently (words such as ‘cyberspace’, ‘tweeting’, ‘googled’ and ‘downsize’, for example). The other main kinds of words are **function words**. These are conjunctions, prepositions and articles, which are used in various ways to create relationships within sentences. These words act as the glue that holds the sentence together. Function words tend not to be added to in English—we just stick to the same ones that have been used for generations. Among these words you will find conjunctions such as ‘and’ or ‘but’, prepositions such as ‘on’, ‘by’, ‘with’ or ‘from’, the definite article ‘the’ and indefinite articles ‘a’ or ‘an’. In this chapter we are concerned mostly with the content words rather than function words.

#Content words: Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs; the largest part of the English vocabulary and the words that supply substance.

#Function words: Conjunctions, prepositions and articles; words that help to show the relationship between content words, thus giving meaning to the content words.

Taking the content words one at a time, let’s start with *nouns*. The simplest possible way of defining them is to say that they are used to name objects (such as ‘tree’) and abstract concepts and feelings (such as ‘discussion’ or ‘affection’). Nouns fall into two main groups. People who play Scrabble will know that they can’t get away with using proper nouns, which are specific in naming individual people or entities, and are written with an upper case first letter, such as Canberra or Murray River. Scrabble players are, however, allowed to use common nouns, which are generic; that is, they refer to any member of a class of things. You will also come across another class related to common nouns, called collective nouns. These refer to collections of items; for example, a company, organisation, team, crowd or community. Collective nouns operate grammatically in the same way as singular nouns. Collective nouns such as ‘army’, ‘university’ or ‘research organisation’ are an important concept in news writing and a source of common errors among people new to professional media work. We will come back to them later, as it is important to link nouns to the correct form of verbs and pronouns to make sense. Collective nouns take singular verbs and pronouns, so we would say ‘the university is expanding its courses’, rather than ‘the university are expanding their courses’.

Nouns have an important associate, known as the *pronoun*. Pronouns are words (such as ‘it’, ‘him’, ‘her’, ‘their’ and many others) that stand in for a noun. Pronouns are useful for making the language flow more smoothly. For instance, it is natural to say ‘Martina is writing her first book’ rather than ‘Martina is writing Martina’s first book’. When you use a pronoun, the noun to which it refers is known as its antecedent. The antecedent of ‘her’ in our example is ‘Martina’.

Pronouns may also be in first, second or third person: ‘I bring the picnic basket’ uses a first person pronoun; ‘You make the salad’ uses second person; ‘He opens the bottle’ uses third person.

Pronouns are interesting because they inflect. This simply means that they change their form depending upon their role in the sentence. Consider the following:

I am going with Mark to the movies.

Mark is going with *me* to the movies.

Here we are talking about the same person, but we use two different words: I and me. Why is this? Pronoun inflection is a remnant from ancient times, reflecting that fact that in the early languages with which English has a distant link, all nouns and pronouns were inflected. You can see this clearly if you look at, for example, Latin. In this language you might see a name such as Marcus at the beginning of the sentence, but it could appear as Marcum or perhaps Marco when the word is needed to fulfil a different grammatical role. In both Latin and Greek, pronouns also changed their form depending upon their grammatical function. In English we do not inflect nouns, but we do inflect pronouns. This means that the form of the word will depend on whether it is being used as a grammatical subject or an object. In the sentences 'I am going with Mark to the movies' and 'Mark is going with me to the movies', my grammatical position changes—in this case, from subject to indirect object—and therefore the form of the pronoun must change. Usually, people instinctively inflect pronouns without knowing anything about their special nature, but errors can easily creep in. Consider these two sentences:

My husband and I will open this fete.

This fete is to be opened by my husband and I.

One of these is incorrect, even if you have heard something like it said by royalty. In the second sentence, note what happens when you remove 'my husband and': the sentence becomes 'This fete is to be opened by I'. The error becomes clear when you look at it like this. Always check your pronouns to ensure that you have inflected them properly. Here's another example:

Him and me went out to dinner.

By testing each pronoun in turn here, you can better see what the problem is: 'Him went out to dinner' and 'Me went out to dinner'. These sentences need to have their pronouns inflected correctly to show that they form part of a plural subject, to become:

He and I went out to dinner.

Next we turn to *verbs*. Verbs may well be the most important words in news media because journalism is always about things happening, and concepts of action can only be conveyed by verbs. We know that nouns name the items or abstract concepts being referred to in sentences. Verbs describe what the items or concepts do. They are commonly known as the 'doing' or 'action' words, and they drive the action of the sentence. Some simple examples are 'horses *gallop*' and 'journalists *write*'. The verbs 'gallop' and 'write' are simple verbs; that is, they are only one word. But verbs can be more complicated than that. For instance, compound verbs are made up of two or even more words. An example might be

She turned off the television.

or indeed

She turned the television off.

or even, depending upon the shade of meaning being conveyed

She was turning the television off.

Verbs may be in the past, present or future tense. For example, consider:

wrote (past tense)

writes (present tense)

will write (future tense).

Note that the future tense in English cannot be rendered with just one word. You always need another word to convey the sense of something that hasn't yet happened.

Apart from simple past, present and future, other tenses such as the past imperfect, past perfect and past continuous are available in English to help us convey meaning. Think of some other forms of these verbs:

He has written.

He is writing.

He will be writing.

So verbs take different forms, depending on their function in the sentence and the subtleties of meaning they are reporting. Their exact form changes depending upon the meaning you wish to convey. Understanding how to use verbs properly helps journalists and other communicators to convey the complexities of stories and ideas. You should also understand the need for strong verbs, the verbs that carry meaning most clearly. For example, weak verb formations such as 'impacted on' or 'facilitated' do not carry as much meaning as 'damaged' or 'made possible'. Remember: verbs are the powerhouses of sentences. They are the grammatical tools needed to indicate action, the main point of the many forms of media writing.

Sentences as units of communication

The Ancient Greeks, who contributed so much to the study of language, saw the sentence as the largest unit of grammar and the smallest complete utterance. They recognised that the human brain takes in information better in some ways than in others. A well-written sentence that adheres to some simple principles of composition is the best way to receive information. The important qualifier here is 'well-written', and this does not just mean grammatical. A well-written sentence displays good grammar, certainly, but it also honours the fact that human brains should not be overloaded with information. A sentence, therefore, should contain a single thought or several closely connected thoughts. The substance of the sentence is carried by the content words, while the function words and the grammatical structure work together to form the various relationships

that you are trying to convey. Your writing should be grammatically correct, but also it must bring out the meaning of the sentence by paring back overloading and undue complexity, and attempting to maximise the information value of the sentence. Try to get into the Ancient Greek spirit of seeing the sentence as a fundamental element of communication that gives the reader immediate access to the meaning of your communication.

While English sentences have a number of different basic functions, including asking questions or issuing orders, in this chapter we are thinking specifically about the way we make statements, through the declarative sentence (also known as an indicative sentence). In effect, these sentences exist to show the interrelationship of nouns: what those nouns do and what happens to those nouns. Nouns carry substance and meaning, and are used in various ways within a sentence. The central grammatical roles for nouns are the 'subject' and the 'object'. This knowledge is helpful in constructing informative sentences, because placing the grammatical subject at the start of a sentence is one way of efficiently delivering written information. When you are able to grasp the exact role of the nouns you use in sentences, you have greater control over their deployment. In so doing, you can create stronger and more meaningful sentences.

WHICH ENGLISH?

English is a large, complicated language with many variations among its user groups. As stated earlier, there is no arbiter of correct English. You will have to develop your own standards in relation to the best users of English. Understanding 'Standard English' may help. Standard English tends to be the language of the public sphere in the English-speaking world; the form that is considered 'correct'. In fact, under the umbrella of Standard English you will find variations, such as the sharp differences between Australian English and US English. Australian media workers will probably find their voice using the forms of correct English in common usage in the Australian public sphere. This form of English tends to be the best way to convey information because it is the widely accepted form of the language, is generally free of vernacular and slang, and adheres to the rules of traditional grammar. Within Australia, several dialects of English are in common use. Some of these use colloquial and ungrammatical formulations and these are often derided by users of Standard English. For example, here are some phrases in Standard English compared with colloquial Australian English:

STANDARD AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH	COLLOQUIAL AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH
I saw him at the demonstration.	I seen him at the demonstration.
I couldn't find anyone to comment.	I couldn't find nobody to comment.
We did the bookings yesterday.	We done the bookings yesterday.
What are you doing at lunchtime?	What are youse doing at lunchtime?

The foundation of journalistic sentences: S–V–O

Using nouns and verbs, we are now in a position to make the simplest of all sentences in English. This is called the *subject–verb sentence*, which consists of a noun and a verb. For example, we can say 'Annette writes'. This is grammatically correct, and contains a **subject** (in this case, Annette) and

a verb (writes), which stands on its own as descriptive of the action taking place. In grammatical terms the subject is sometimes referred to as the topic, although this doesn't always mean that the sentence is only about the subject.

Of course, most sentences do not have a structure as simple as containing just a subject and verb. The classical sentence construction in English has that other element referred to earlier: the **object**. This is the subject–verb–object sentence, often shortened to the **S–V–O sentence**. In this form, the verb connects the topic of sentence, Annette, to the thing being acted upon: *the object*, also known as the predicate, the comment or (in classical terms) the accusative case. So we might have another sentence such as 'Annette writes a story'. In this sentence, the object is 'a story'.

#Object: In grammar, the thing being acted upon in a sentence; the subject of the sentence acts on its object.

#S–V–O sentence: A standard sentence structure in English containing a subject (what is acting), the verb (the action being taken) and object (what is being acted upon).

INTRANSITIVE AND TRANSITIVE VERBS

In our example 'Annette writes', the present tense verb 'writes' does not need an object (that is, something being acted upon). Therefore, this particular verb, used in this particular sentence, is called intransitive, which is the only kind of verb you can use in simple S–V sentences. You couldn't use a transitive verb in this sentence—for example, 'Annette sends'—and still make sense. Some verbs have to have something to act upon and some don't. In the case of 'writes', this verb can be either transitive or intransitive, depending on the context of the sentence. In our S–V–O example, 'Annette writes a story', it is transitive.

To recap, the *subject* (or topic) of this sentence is Annette. The *direct object* is 'a story', because this is the thing being acted upon by way of the verb. You may also have an *indirect object*; for instance, another sentence might be 'Annette writes the editor a story'. Here the indirect object is 'the editor'. The sentence will still have meaning without the indirect object. The purpose of the indirect object is to add more information about the direct object, to make the sentence more complete.

SPOTTING THE GRAMMATICAL SUBJECT

Keep in mind that subjects can have more than one element. For example, in the sentence

The old man and his dog walked through the park.

the subject is 'The old man and his dog'.

Also note that the subject is not necessarily the first thing you read in a sentence. For example, in the sentence

After visiting his patients, the doctor returned to the surgery.

the subject is 'the doctor'.

The S–V–O construction provides a simple sentence that fulfils the requirements of sentences in English: to convey meaning via a linear progression. In reality, most sentences are more complex than this (see later in this chapter for complex and compound sentences), but they still have this

underlying structure, which, with practice, you will be able to discern. Being able to identify the parts of speech is the first step to really controlling your writing. Too often words are strung together to look like sentences: they start with a capital letter and end with a full stop, but what appears in between is not complete and is therefore ungrammatical.

TABLE 14.1 Identifying parts of the sentence: a guide to recognising the subject, verb, direct object and indirect object in a selection of sentences

	SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT	INDIRECT OBJECT
He and I set up the projector.	He and I	set up	the projector	
After eating at the restaurant, we saw a movie.	We	saw	a movie	
Fire destroyed the building.	Fire	destroyed	the building	
Police shot a man dead last night.	Police	shot	a man	
Bernard is telling you the truth.	Bernard	is telling	the truth	you
The editor bought the cadets a round of drinks.	The editor	bought	a round of drinks	the cadets
I asked her a question.	I	asked	a question	her

To be correct, sentences must be powered by the right verb. In the S–V–O formulation, only a **finite verb** is correct. In our S–V–O example, the finite verb is ‘writes’. Finite verbs are recognisable by the fact that they can be changed to indicate past, present or future tense: wrote, writes, will write. Verbs appear in many different forms, but to identify the finite verb look for the word that indicates the driving action of the sentence. A common error involves attempting to use the word ‘being’ for this purpose. This construction is wrong:

This being the way the company has always operated.

Because the verb is wrong, this is not a complete sentence. The verb that has been used here is ‘being’, which cannot be used to create an S–V–O sentence. This string of words does not have a finite verb to power it, and it can only be grammatical if it is part of a bigger sentence:

The driver delivers the products by truck, this being the way the company has always operated.

The operating verb in this construction is now the word ‘delivers’, which is a suitable finite verb. In this case, you could quite comfortably say ‘delivered’ for past tense, or ‘will deliver’ for future tense, and the sentence will still hold. You cannot do this with the verb ‘being’.

Another way to fix this sentence would be to change the verb to something suitable. This may lead to a new sentence, such as:

This is the way the company has always operated.

Your sentences are rarely as straightforward as ‘Annette writes a story’, but they will still display this logic even when they are more complicated. A journalistic sentence, such as ‘Police charged a man yesterday with murder after the discovery of a body at the university’, is an active and newsy sentence that has a subject–verb–object structure, with the addition of extra descriptive information.

finite verb: A verb that must be present in an S–V–O structure and which can be inflected for past, present or future tense.

The part of the sentence that reads ‘after the discovery of a body’ is an adjunct phrase, but the subject–verb–object part is ‘police charged a man’, which you can see clearly conveys something that has happened and therefore informs the reader. Try to analyse your own sentences in terms of subject–verb–object and attempt to adhere to this form as much as possible. Remember: you can tell if a verb is the correct one to operate the sentence if you can change its tense to past, present and future. Other forms of verbs cannot do this.

More complicated sentences

Most journalistic writing will be simple, clear and straightforward. This can be achieved not only through the simple S–V–O construction, but also through a grammatically more complicated structure that has more than one clause. A clause is a group of words containing a subject and verb, which stand alone as a simple sentence or may form part of a sentence when joined with another clause or clauses. More complicated structures include:

- complex sentences—containing a main clause and one or more attached subordinate clause/s
- compound sentences—containing clauses of equal grammatical status
- compound-complex sentences—containing two or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

These different sentence structures simply enable conceptual connections between the information or ideas we wish to convey to be made coherent within a single sentence. A simple sentence does not always enable these connections, so we need to select a suitable structure to make these relationships clear.

Here is an example of a *complex sentence* containing a main clause and a subordinate clause. Notice how the subordinate clause adds information and assists in making relationships between facts clear. This sentence forms a hierarchy of information and shows the reader the relative importance of the facts in the sentence; thus, the main clause carries the most important information. Subordinate clauses can be added to a main clause in several ways, by using a *subordinating conjunction* (words such as ‘because’, ‘while’ and ‘whereas’) or by a *relative pronoun* (such as ‘which’). In this first example the underlined subordinate clause is joined to the main clause by a subordinating conjunction (the word ‘though’):

Cityville City Council will table new rules for ratepayers, though not before 30 June.

Subordinate clauses can take various forms. They may be based upon a noun, an adjective or an adverb. Our example above is an adverbial clause in which ‘though not before 30 June’ modifies the verb ‘will table’ that is in the main part of the sentence.

Compound sentences make connections between information of equal value by joining complete sentences using *coordinating conjunctions*, most commonly ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘or’. Consider this compound sentence, in which the clauses have equal grammatical status:

Cityville City Council will table new rules for ratepayers and the Council is expected to make changes to its online payment arrangements.

In this case both clauses can stand alone grammatically, once you remove the 'and'. Compound sentences may also be joined by adverbs such as 'however', 'therefore' or 'nevertheless', which are often used before a semicolon. For example:

Cityville City Council will table new rules for ratepayers;
however, rules for local business will remain unchanged.

Compound-complex sentences have elements of both compound and complex sentences:

Cityville City Council will table new rules for ratepayers and the Council is expected to make changes to its online payment arrangements, though pay by phone arrangements will continue.

Whether you are using a complex or a compound sentence, or a hybrid of the two, *try as much as possible to limit your sentences to no more than three clauses*. If your sentence has four or more clauses, it may have to be restructured because readers may not be able to follow the meaning right through. If you write sentences containing eight or more clauses, your writing may be too hard to follow and your reader may give up.

Complex and compound sentences are most useful when they form strong bonds between several important facts. They are less effective when they are used as an opportunity to string together large amounts of barely related information. Therefore, avoid a sentence that looks like this:

Cityville City Council will table new rules for ratepayers and the Council is expected to make changes to its online payment arrangements, though pay by phone arrangements will continue and ratepayers may attend the shopfront on Albion Street although the hours will be restricted and new rules are likely after the next local government election but the postal address will be unchanged.

USE GRAMMAR TO AID MEANING: HIGHLIGHTING THE GRAMMATICAL SUBJECT

Your sentences will be more powerful and meaningful if you think about the dominant noun and place it at the start of your sentence. The first sentences of news stories ideally should start with a strong subject, rather than a pronoun or a conjunction. For example, in a story that deals with uranium exports to India, don't begin your story like this: 'It is thought that in the broader economy the opening of the market for Australian uranium to India will' Instead, think about how you can highlight the main key words in the sentence, perhaps like this: 'Exports of Australian uranium to India are not likely to boost the broader economy'

When sentences go bad

While a beautifully crafted and grammatically correct sentence provides a basic element of written communication, achieving that objective can be fraught with difficulties. Many things can go wrong; below is a sample of the more common errors.

A common problem in constructing sentences with multiple elements, including clauses and phrases, is simply to overdo things to the point that the sentences are disjointed and graceless.

Have a look at the difference between the first and second sentences here and see what a difference a *simplified sentence structure* makes to ease of reading and comprehension:

In a major research project by Bloggs (2014), on the foundational causes of civil unrest in Incognita, it was found that upon the overturning of the interim military government in 1956, efforts to introduce a functioning democracy were seriously impaired.

Civil unrest and difficulties in forming a functioning democracy in Incognita may be traced to the overturn of the interim military government in 1956, according to a new study by Bloggs.

Fused or run-on sentences occur when parts of a compound or complex sentence are not joined properly. Consider this sentence:

Cityville City Council has imposed a trial smoking ban on all outdoor areas in Allegra Place from Monday the Council said a survey of more than 900 people found that most people would prefer the entire area be smoke-free.

This may be corrected in several ways:

Cityville City Council has imposed a trial smoking ban on all outdoor areas in Allegra Place from Monday after a survey of more than 900 people found that most people would prefer the entire area be smoke-free.

Cityville City Council has imposed a trial smoking ban on all outdoor areas in Allegra Place from Monday. The Council said a survey of more than 900 people found that most people would prefer the entire area be smoke-free.

Comma splices occur when main clauses are joined by a comma instead of a conjunction or a semi-colon. For example:

Chocolate is one of the most popular flavours of milkshake, another favourite is strawberry.

This may be corrected in various ways, including:

Chocolate is one of the most popular flavours of milkshake, while another favourite is strawberry.

Chocolate is one of the most popular flavours of milkshake; another favourite is strawberry.

Sentence fragments are incomplete sentences—usually subordinate clauses or phrases instead of full sentences. For example:

Which we recognise is not ideal.

This would need more information to form a complete sentence. For example:

The cadet journalist will join the newsroom when the chief sub is away,
which we recognise is not ideal.

Dangling modifiers occur when adjunct phrases do not join correctly to the main part of the sentence (see Chapter 15). For example:

After holding atomic bomb tests in Australia, Maralinga was left contaminated by the British.

This sentence actually says that Maralinga held the bomb tests, which is clearly absurd. That initial phrase attaches to the first available noun or pronoun in the main part of the sentence. This sentence must be corrected, like this:

After holding atomic bomb tests in Australia, the British left Maralinga contaminated.

Lack of parallel structure means that the grammar of a sentence is mismatched. For example:

Our manager suggests three strategies for achieving a balanced budget: reducing spending, halting recruitment and to sell our offshore assets.

You can see that this sentence suggests three related items. The grammar of each must match. Therefore, the sentence should be structured like this:

Our manager suggests three strategies for achieving a balanced budget: reducing spending, halting recruitment and selling our offshore assets.

This problem can also arise in lists. For example:

Media strategy goals:

Building profile for the new product

To ensure our CEO is known to local media

Proactivity

Will place our company on a positive footing before planned relocation.

These list elements have inconsistent grammar. Correct the problem like this:

Media strategy goals:

Building profile for the new product;

Ensuring our CEO is known to local media;

Establishing a proactive public relations approach; and

Placing our company on a positive footing before the planned relocation.

Punctuating a compound or complex sentence can cause confusion. For example, the semicolon (;) may be used to substitute for a conjunction—in fact, this is one of its main functions, apart from separating elements of a list (and providing a wink in an emoticon). Here is an example of it being used to stand in for a conjunction:

Mary Shelley's works are entertaining; they are full of engaging ideas.

In this sentence the semicolon is taking the place of a conjunction such as 'because'. Semicolons and colons (:) are not interchangeable. They have different functions. To quote from Strunk and White (2000: 7):

Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars ... an amplification or an illustrative quotation. A colon tells the reader that what follows is closely related to

the preceding clause. The colon has more effect than the comma, less power to separate than the semicolon and more formality than the dash.

Here is an example of correct colon use:

The squalor of the streets reminded her of a line from Oscar Wilde:
‘We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.’

Subject–verb (S–V) agreement

As is often the case in English, the rule is simple but the execution more difficult. The subject of a sentence must ‘agree’ with the finite verb of the sentence; if the subject is singular then the verb must be singular too. If it is plural, then the verb must be plural. This means that we write:

The lawyer discusses her strategy with the client.

and not

The lawyer discuss her strategy with the client.

Most people with a reasonable grasp of English will have no problem understanding S–V agreement here. But what happens when the sentence is a little less clear-cut? Consider these sentences:

The adventure of professional writing—its trials, its joys, its challenges—are not soon forgotten.

and

The adventure of professional writing—its trials, its joys, its challenges—is not soon forgotten.

The correct sentence here has to be the second example, even if it doesn’t immediately seem right. Words that intervene between subject and verb do not affect the number (singular or plural) of the verb. But you can probably see how this could be a trap.

There are other traps as well. Consider the following:

He is one of those people who is never ready on time.

or

He is one of those people who are never ready on time.

Here the second sentence is correct. Using a singular verb in a subject construction such as this is a common mistake, but you have to remember that the word ‘people’ here is the key part of the subject, rather than the singular ‘one’.

Words such as ‘no one’, ‘each’, ‘everyone’ and ‘everybody’ generally take a singular verb. For example, ‘Everyone is happy; no one is sad’. There can be a problem with the word ‘none’, which may operate as either singular or plural. In the following case, it is singular: ‘None of us is perfect’, in the sense of no one, or not one. However, it may be used in another sense as well, when ‘none’ is intended to mean more than one thing or person: ‘None are so cherished as those who are no longer here.’

Collective nouns

Perhaps the biggest issue concerning subject–verb agreement, certainly in media newsrooms, is the form of the verb used in the case of collective nouns. This rule may appear to be counterintuitive, which may be why it is such a common error. Words such as government, council, university and many others take a singular verb (and a singular pronoun). The difficulties often arise in the case of collective nouns that sometimes have a plural sense. For example, in most cases ‘family’ is a collective noun that is treated singularly. But when there is a sense of the constituent parts acting plurally, it is slightly less clear-cut. For example, in the sentence ‘The family put down their dishes’, you would need to accept that this is a plural sense of a collective noun: to write ‘The family put down its dishes’ wouldn’t sound right. Also, in sports journalism the rule often is flexible, to account for the fact that while a team is a singular entity, it is made up of constituent parts that act plurally.

The most important time to remember this rule is when writing about an organisation or company. Say you are talking about the ABC. This organisation is treated grammatically as a collective noun, and collective nouns always take singular verbs (and pronouns):

The ABC broadcasts from its studios in the city.

Note that the finite verb in this sentence is the word ‘broadcasts’, and it is singular. You do not write:

The ABC broadcast from their studios in the city.

As much as the tendency exists to think of an organisation or company as a plural entity, you must see it as a collective noun and always choose a singular verb to go with it. This applies to companies such as Microsoft or Qantas, federal and state governments, and organisations such as the Red Cross and the army.

Active and passive voice

In English, unlike in various other languages, word order is crucial. English does not permit you to reorder the words in our original sentence ‘Annette writes the story’ to become ‘Annette the story writes’. There is, however, another way to convey the same message in a different word order. The concept of active voice and passive voice is important in journalism. ‘Annette writes the story’ is in *active voice*, because it follows the S–V–O construction. By its nature, this structure makes the topic of the sentence the most prominent. But you can also say ‘The story is written by Annette’, and what was the object now starts the sentence instead of appearing at the end, thus making this part of the sentence more prominent. The subject and object have swapped positions, and the subject (Annette) is now called the agent—‘by Annette’. Note also that the verb has undergone a change. You must add in a new word (in this case ‘is’) to preserve the original meaning. The original verb also changes, from ‘writes’ to ‘written’.

The new sentence is written in *passive voice*, which is not recommended as a journalistic writing style, in part because it tends to sound stilted and wordy. This kind of sentence structure guarantees a compound verb, because passive verbs are always at least two words. But you can’t always avoid passive voice. This sentence structure may be necessary, for example, if the active

subject is unknown or not easily stated. This lack of information might lead to a sentence such as ‘Walter’s father was killed in the Second World War’, which is in the passive form. Because we don’t know who or what actually killed Walter’s father, it cannot be rendered in active voice. In this case, there can be no agent because we don’t have enough information to be able to say who carried out the action of the sentence.

Sometimes, even when the agent is known, it is not stated. Writers may have a variety of reasons for choosing passive voice. In many cases it is used to distance the writer from the reader, such as in the case of scientific writing where the ‘agent’ (usually the researcher) is less important than the outcome of the action. Passive voice may also be chosen because it seems to lend the appearance of objectivity. This form of sentence structure can also remove responsibility for the action in the sentence. You may have noticed that government papers and other official documents are filled with sentences in the passive voice. Consider, for example, this passive voice sentence:

The hospital beds have been shut down.

This passive sentence has no agent, and therefore has the effect of holding no one responsible for the action. Including crucial information makes for a better sentence, and it may be possible to write the sentence like this:

The hospital beds have been shut down by the Health Department.

In this case a journalist would rewrite it as:

The Health Department shut down the hospital beds.

As professional writers, you must be sparing with the passive voice, because it can remove responsibility for actions as well as being difficult or confusing to read. You can’t always eliminate it, but you can minimise it. The only way you can do this, though, is if you can recognise it when you see it. Also note that the concept of active and passive voice does not refer to verbal tense. A common misconception is that active voice is simply a sentence in the present tense. Either voice can be in any of the tenses. Table 14.2 lists some examples:

TABLE 14.2 Voice and tense

	ACTIVE	PASSIVE
Past	I wrote the story	The story was written by me
Present	I write the story	The story is written by me
Future	I will write the story	The story will be written by me

HOW TO TELL IF A SENTENCE IS IN THE PASSIVE VOICE

You can usually tell if you have written a sentence in the passive voice if, first, it has a compound verb such as ‘was written’, and also if the word ‘by’ is used to indicate the passive agent. Note, however, that in those sentences where the subject is not known (such as ‘Walter’s father was killed in the Second World War’) or where the agent is being concealed (‘The hospital beds have been shut down’), there is no agent indicated, and therefore no use of the word ‘by’.



Adjectives

Adjectives describe a noun, adding further information of various kinds; for example, desirable, fatal, beautiful, allergic, happy, active, monstrous, nosy and angry. In English, adjectives may be recognisable because they have characteristic endings, such as -able, -al, -ate, -ful, -ic, -ive, -ous, -y and others. Adjectives also can be formed from verbs; for example, riding competition, sliced bread or deserted beach. And nouns may be used as adjectives: consider, for example, the space shuttle or tennis lessons. Adjectives usually do not have plural forms, but they may have degrees; for example, happy, happier and happiest. Adjectives may appear in a variety of different places in a sentence. When they appear before the noun they modify, they are known as *attributive adjectives* (for example, blue sky). When they appear after their noun, they are known as *post-positive adjectives* (for example, the Governor-General). When they appear after a verb, in the position of sentence predicate, they are known as *predicative adjectives* (for example, the sky is blue).

Adverbs

Adverbs give more information about the action of the verb. An adverb can indicate time, manner, place, reason or purpose. These descriptive words offer the answers to questions about the verb, such as Where? Why? When? How? What for? How long? How often? and How much? Many adverbs of manner are formed from adjectives by the addition of -ly: for example, rapidly, smoothly, cleverly, stupidly, wildly and boldly. Other kinds of adverbs that indicate time, place and degree have no particular distinguishing form, so we must look at them in context to identify them as adverbs. In the sentence 'Let's go now', for example, the word 'now' is an adverb. You can recognise it by the fact that it adds more information to the verb 'go': it answers the question 'When?'

Sometimes adjectives and adverbs are essential, but even if they are not they can be informative and useful when used sparingly by media writers. However, be ruthless in cutting out those that don't add sufficient information to justify their inclusion. Always weigh up the usefulness of every word in your sentences, especially adjectives and adverbs. Note also that adverbs and adjectives can lend bias to a piece of writing and may be a subtle form of editorialising. Note, for example, the differences in tone in the following sentences:

At least five states have sensibly decided to introduce new requirements
for recycling domestic waste.

Or

At least five states have decided to introduce new requirements for recycling domestic waste.

The addition of the adverb 'sensibly' changes the tone of the sentence completely and adds editorial comment.

Apostrophes and commas

Poor punctuation can compromise meaning and professional polish. While some punctuation rules are clear-cut (such as rules of apostrophe use), others are more vague (such as rules of comma use). We will examine both of these issues here.

Apostrophes

The rules for the use of *apostrophes* are simple and straightforward. Apostrophes are used:

- to indicate contraction: ‘It’s [It is] a pity that people don’t [do not] care about good punctuation.’
- to show possession (in nouns, not pronouns): ‘The editor’s lament’ for singular; ‘The editors’ lament’ for plural.

The most common pair of errors is to leave out an apostrophe where it is needed but insert one where it isn’t. For example, the famous ‘greengrocer’s apostrophe’—where signs outside fruit and vegetable shops show apple’s, pear’s and watermelon’s—is a prominent example of adding gratuitous punctuation to simple plurals. The iron rule is that simple plurals do not take apostrophes.

The following sentence contains simple plurals and therefore does not require any apostrophes:

The Ministers arrived in separate planes.

In other cases where apostrophes are required, people often leave them out. For example, the following phrases are not correctly punctuated:

The childrens playground

The babies bibs

The cats whiskers

They must be edited to the correct versions:

The children’s playground

The baby’s bibs/The babies’ bibs

The cat’s whiskers/The cats’ whiskers

Note that in their original, unpunctuated, form it is not always possible to determine whether what is being referred to is singular or plural. Correctly applied apostrophes will tell you.

Possessive pronouns (his, hers, ours, theirs, yours and its) never take an apostrophe. They exist as words only to show possession, and no further symbol is needed for this function. Consider, for example, ‘The cat chased its tail’, in which the possessive pronoun ‘its’ does not require an apostrophe.

The apostrophe is needed in, for example, ‘two years’ jail’ or ‘one week’s notice’: take note of the difference in plural and singular here.

An apostrophe is not needed in, for example, the 1970s, or to show the plural of acronyms such as QCs or MPs. Just a lower case ‘s’ is sufficient. If you are writing, for example, ‘the ’70s’, you do need the apostrophe to show the omission of the first part of the year, but you don’t use it between the number and the ‘s’.

Confusion can arise between possessives and adjectives. For example, ‘Melbourne citizens’ is different from ‘Melbourne’s citizens’, and the adjectival form (the first example here) is more usual in journalism. The confusion is linked to the word order convention in English, where it is usual to place both an adjective and a possessive before a noun. Because they sometimes look similar, they can be confused.

#Apostrophe:

A punctuation mark used to show contraction or possession.

Persistent usage has meant that some place names don't have apostrophes even when, strictly speaking, they should; for example, Wilsons Promontory, St Andrews, Badgerys Creek and so on have lost their original apostrophes, much as it pains the pedantic writer.

Aspiring journalists should be aware that the misuse of apostrophes is a subeditor killer. Subeditors find it difficult to understand why people who want to be paid to write sometimes find the apostrophe impossible to master. Apostrophes could not be simpler—the rules are really straightforward. Getting this right is important, if only to save the sanity of the poor old senior sub, who has probably seen a few too many misplaced apostrophes than is safe for the ageing mind.

Commas

The rules for apostrophes are relatively clear-cut, but the rules for *commas* are not. These little marks are used to separate ideas in a sentence and to otherwise make meaning clear. They are intended to provide natural pauses within a sentence, to regulate the rhythm of the sentence in ways that assist meaning.

The trend these days in Standard Australian English is to cut down on the use of commas where possible. Always keep in mind, though, that commas can change the meaning of a sentence:

The politicians, who liked to talk, were appointed to the committee.

The politicians who liked to talk were appointed to the committee.

Here are some rules that may help comma use:

- 1 To avoid ambiguity:

'When the barrister finished summing up, the case was closed.'

Without a comma here, ambiguity may arise by joining 'summing up' and 'the case'.

- 2 Between adjectives before a noun:

The government experienced a large, unexpected downturn in the polls.

- 3 In a list to separate the elements:

The basic stages of writing an article are: outlining, researching, drafting, checking and confirming facts, redrafting and editing.

- 4 To distinguish parenthetical words and phrases:

My view, therefore, is that editors should always be consistent.

COMMAS IN PAIRS

Pay special attention to the point about parenthetical words and phrases. Commas must always be used in pairs in this case. You cannot open such a phrase with a comma and not close it. In the sentence 'My view, therefore, is that editors should always be consistent', not placing the second comma after the word 'therefore' would be grammatically incorrect. Lack of parenthetical commas is a common error that leads to hard to follow and graceless sentences.

CONCLUSION

Language has enormous power in our culture, and perhaps nowhere more so than in the media. Powerful images are certainly important, but sometimes there is no substitute for crafting a strong news story, a vivid word picture, a telling line of dialogue or a masterful statement. The ability to write powerful, meaningful prose is a great responsibility as well as an enduring source of satisfaction for everyone who works in the media. Eloquence, grace and crispness are also highly regarded virtues. The foundations of the language will hold firm while you take your own writing to lofty heights. Without strong foundations, the heights may be harder to achieve.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- All aspiring writers should seek to understand the foundations of the English language to ensure they have control over their writing.
- The power of plain English will help you convey your information and ideas with clarity.
- Grammar means the rules of the relationships that words have to one another in a sentence.
- Our language must have rules so that we can understand each other.
- George Orwell made useful statements about the need for strong, clear English. His six principles for good writing are relevant today.
- The two main types of vocabulary are content words such as nouns and verbs and functions words such as conjunctions, prepositions and articles.
- Ensure that you can understand how pronouns work so that you can inflect them correctly depending upon their grammatical function.
- Adopt ‘Standard English’ as your means of communicating in the public sphere.
- Sentences are the largest unit of grammar and the smallest complete utterance.
- A well-written sentence that adheres to some simple principles of composition is the best way to receive information.
- Choose your verbs carefully and ensure that your declarative sentences always contain a finite verb.
- Understand the kinds of sentence structures: simple, complex, compound, compound/complex. Sentences may also be in active or passive voice.
- Watch for common sentence structure problems such as comma splices and run-on sentences and understand how to correct them.
- Use singular verbs and pronouns with collective nouns.
- Be aware that adjunct words such as adjectives and adverbs may add bias to your work.
- Correct use of apostrophes and commas will add to your professional writing polish and help ensure that your meaning is always clear.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Identify the grammatical subject, verb and direct object in the following:
 - a Floods destroyed the building.
 - b The old woman and her cat sat on the front porch.
 - c Rosita bought the tickets yesterday.
 - d Nobody saw anybody.

- 2 Correct the sentence structure errors in the following:
 - a The aircraft made an emergency landing its landing gear had not come down properly.
 - b The Federal Treasurer decided on three strategies: to find savings in expenditures, to lower the tax-free threshold and increasing the rate of income tax.
 - c The zoo obtained licences to undertake a breeding program with the endangered species, it was not allowed to display the animals to the public.
 - d While living in Italy, the theory of right-angled triangles was formulated by Pythagoras.
- 3 Indicate whether the following sentences are in active or passive voice, then rewrite them in the opposite voice (that is, if you find an active voice sentence, rewrite it as passive, and vice versa):
 - a The writer's new novel impresses the critics.
 - b We are driven mad by the sound of the jackhammer.
 - c Four people were chased by a man with a gun in a city park last night.
- 4 Correct the punctuation in the following sentences:
 - a Today's critic's, are tomorrow's client's.
 - b The Council contravened it's own rule's.
 - c The proposal was a large awkward document that could not be easily, summarised by the journalist.
- 5 According to George Orwell in 'Politics and the English Language', 'it is clear that the decline of a language must ultimately have political and economic causes'. Orwell drew a relationship between politics and language, as have other writers like Australia's Don Watson. In no more than 300 words, discuss the notion of language being linked to political conditions.
- 6 'A language is the expression of a culture: as long as the culture is fertile and vigorous, so will the language be' (Mackenzie 2004). Is the English language fertile and vigorous? Answer in no more than 300 words.

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15

SUBEDITING, NEWS LANGUAGE AND CONVENTION

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

People new to media writing often bristle at the notion that they have to follow someone else's writing rules. A common argument is that rules stifle people's creativity through prescriptive and arbitrary pedantry imposed by people who have no life; and grammar rules keep changing so why should we have to learn them? We don't speak the same way as William Shakespeare did. English evolves ...

Yes, language does evolve, and it is a wonderful process, one that continually enriches our primary communication tool. But a language without rules, even relatively transitory ones, is not a language at all, because it cannot be fully understood by all who use it. Rules are there to create meaning, and meaning is vital in all media professions. Also, high-quality media value consistency, which boosts the overall quality of the product. Consistency helps to put the reader or the listener at ease, as it removes irritation or confusion over trifles and leaves them free to consider the main point of what you have written. Many media settings require employees to adhere to a style, which helps to ensure consistency. The subeditor is often the custodian of a publication's language and style, but all subs appreciate

the reporters taking pains in this area as well, so they don't have to spend too much time making avoidable, time-consuming corrections. Consistent writing styles can vary quite a bit; style is not a science, so you will find different media jobs require different approaches. On the following pages are some common principles that should serve as a guide only. The magnificent variety of work in the media throws up a matching multiplicity of writing requirements. In this section the more familiar and common ones are on display, but be prepared to be flexible once you find a job in the industry.

In this chapter we look at:

- subeditors and subediting
- news language
- journalistic convention
- a sample style guide
- diagnosing common language problems.

SUBEDITORS AND SUBEDITING

In a media organisation, **subeditors (subs)** edit and correct material submitted by other people, such as reporters and columnists. They are called upon to do many different tasks very quickly. Subs have saved the jobs and reputations of many reporters, because they act as the guard—the gatekeeper—preventing unwarranted, inaccurate, stupid, illogical, tasteless or actionable words being published or broadcast. They are sometimes not held in particularly high regard by those in the industry who are not subs. The show ponies are the reporters and the workhorses are the subs—or so the usual stereotype goes. Often, their work is simply resented by the reporters, who don't appreciate having their writing questioned and altered. In truth, the sub is indispensable and, if pushed, a reporter may even admit it. Journalism has never been a solitary occupation; it always requires teamwork.

One of the hallmarks of a quality publication is decent subediting, even though it is manifestly deficient in some popular publications and many subs have joined the ranks of the unemployed in recent years. Good subediting brings ordinary text to life, eliminates irritating or confusing language, and helps break down those inevitable communication barriers between the producer and the consumer of information. This list shows the range of matters that are overseen by subeditors, in no particular order of importance:

- correct English usage
- consistent written style
- accuracy of content
- adherence to journalistic convention
- adherence to deadlines.

In Chapter 14, we considered the importance of good grammar and punctuation for creating meaning. In this chapter we link these overarching principles more closely to media industry work, and particularly the work of the sub. Communicating with a mass audience carries significant responsibilities—not just to write and edit well but also to ensure that the resulting reportage can

#Subeditor (sub):

A member of a media organisation who edits and corrects material submitted by other people, such as reporters and columnists.

Journal: From the French *journal*; a daily record of events; therefore, a daily newspaper or magazine.

take its place in public information. Journalism is often called the first draft of history. The word 'journalism' obviously is linked to **journal**, which means, strictly speaking, a daily record of events. The emphasis here is on 'record'. Journalists participate in the keeping of records, and it is to be hoped that their record-keeping shows some concern for the gravity of their task. Journalism is a record of the times, demonstrating passing trends and the shifting consensus among practitioners of the language codes, with the symbols of language simply being things that we agree upon as reflecting meanings we hold in our minds. Ideally, writers and subeditors care passionately about ensuring that the language is respected and used effectively to convey ideas that can then form part of our understanding of the world. Language, therefore, should be at the top of the minds of anyone contemplating a communication career. Those who reach the heights of the profession will also be culturally literate because this work demands quite a bit of knowledge about the world (see the box 'Cultural literacy' below).

Language is ever evolving, of course, and as we mentioned in Chapter 14 there is no custodian or arbiter of correct English. We need to decide what we are going to call correct. One test for correctness involves considering the standards educated people adopt when they are paying due attention to their language. What sort of language use is prevalent among people who are obviously taking care of language and using it optimally for communication? This question is not intended to sound elitist; it simply recognises that language needs some form of protection among its practitioners, and those people who care enough about language to use it correctly should guide us to the best forms of language. The most important protection is the need to keep words firmly attached to semantics (meaning) and hence to the world of ideas. Lose the ability to convey nuance, complexity and abstract ideas, and you lose some of your culture.



#Click bait: Internet content, particularly of a sensational or provocative nature, whose main purpose is to attract attention and draw visitors to a particular web page.

FIND YOUR JOURNALISTIC WRITING HERO

Australia has some great journalistic writers. You might find them on the pages of the mainstream broadsheets (or their colour supplements), in some of the high-quality magazines that still manage to be published despite dwindling circulations, in the better online publications that seek to publish the best that journalism has to offer (as opposed to just 'click bait') or in collections of essays or features. Critically analyse what makes the best journalists good writers, and allow yourself to be influenced by the writing standards you encounter. To get you started, seek out work by Helen Garner or Chris Masters. Those with an eye to an earlier era should be reading Clive James, whose serious and lighter pieces of writing are beautifully eloquent and correct.

Lofty as this may sound, there is a strong sense of guardianship of the language among the best of journalists and editors. Some of the world's most ferocious language pedants are also the most prized subeditors on the best publications. Subeditors often teach new journalists, through not very gentle means, that language use is to be taken seriously. You may or may not share this view, but the chances are that you will encounter it during the twists and turns of your careers in the media. If you don't understand and appreciate these principles straight away, it is likely that some rather insensitive editor or subeditor will let you know in less than flattering terms later on, and that process may involve a certain amount of humiliation.

You should aim not only for the lofty goals of eloquence and correctness of language use, but also for the more pedestrian virtue of consistency. Your goal here is ensure that your readers are not irritated or confused. Like static on your television, inconsistent style in any publication can have readers throwing things at the walls and writing furious letters. This inconsistency might, for example, be as simple as spelling 'colour', 'travelling' or 'organise' in different ways in the same story or the same publication, using differing styles for percentages or page numbering, using differing depth of indent, body font height and caption style, or using different styles of titles for individuals. These matters fall within a strictly correct usage range but vary enough to cause anguish among readers. The best subeditors will always aim for consistency, and see it as a matter of professional pride. Consistent style imposes a discipline that should run through all the activities of a journalist and a subeditor. Consistency implies that the people carrying out these roles are precise not only with writing but also with facts and thought.

Accuracy of content is a central issue: there is no substitute in journalism for accuracy. Both reporter and subeditor should have this issue firmly at the front of their minds. However, the subeditor and, ultimately, the managing editor, take the responsibility. You will not be able to check everything yourself if you are subeditor, but you must check key points that could, if wrong, become extremely embarrassing or even actionable.

If you are required, say, to subedit text from a reporter whose story asserts that a major tourist attraction is about to close down because it has failed a safety inspection, don't just assume that the reporter has got the facts correct. Confer first with the reporter to find out how the story was obtained, then obtain your own verification of the facts if you are in any doubt. Don't put through any information that seems questionable. Falsely reporting the closure of a commercial venture is a serious matter. Other more common difficulties can include a misspelt name, or a person's name spelt several different ways in a story. Misspelt names have the potential to cause enormous anger and resentment (and time-consuming complaints) among the wronged parties, and in some cases may lead to legal complications if you identify someone wrongly. Incorrect spelling also makes your work look shoddy. Double-check all name spellings, and that includes place names as well as the names of people. At last count, there were at least four different ways to spell the common name 'Smith' (Smyth, Smithe and Shmith), so do not make assumptions.

CULTURAL LITERACY

Excellent journalism demands many intangibles, including judgment, scholarliness, background knowledge, memory, motivation, curiosity, imagination, discretion, scepticism and disinterested observation. Aspiring journalists should endeavour to develop 'encyclopaedic minds', in the original sense of the Greek word *encyclopaedia*, which means 'circle of knowledge' or a 'rounded education'. A rounded education demands broad understanding of the world. Knowledge is handed down through the generations and is constantly being enriched by new observations and new events played out against the backdrop of human history. The great ancient Greek philosopher, Pythagoras, said: 'Life is like a festival; just as some come to the festival to compete, some to ply their trade, but the best people come as spectators, so in life the slavish men go hunting for fame or gain, the philosophers for truth'. The best people come as spectators. Journalists and editors have that Pythagorean spirit, witnessing events and examining their significance.



The only way you can increase your skills as a spectator is by knowing your way around your cultural legacy. Reading the canon of world literature in its many manifestations is not just a joy to the intelligent person but an essential part of one's professional development as an aspiring journalist. This gathering of knowledge and broadening of one's outlook should also be a matter of professional pride and should never cease throughout one's professional endeavours. A student should cultivate a substantial background in the arts, literature, history, politics, science and technology and, without question, current affairs. Who, for example, was Edmund Barton? What does *cogito ergo sum* mean? What is the Decalogue? What does *modus operandi* mean? Who was Lee Harvey Oswald? What is pertussis? What is the meaning of *terra nullius*? None of this is showing off. If you become reporters and editors, you may on any given day encounter these and many other names or terms, and you will need to know what cultural significance they contain. You will need to make connections in your head that enable you to place or find the term 'Trojan horse' in a piece of copy and note not just its literal, historical meaning but perhaps also its irony or its allegorical associations. Your cultural memory will be tested every single day, as allusions as diverse as 'the sword of Damocles hanging over the Minister's head', 'the heat death of the universe' or 'the Platonic forms' may cross your path and you will need to know what to make of them.

NEWS LANGUAGE

What is news language? There is no simple answer to that question. Journalistic writing has a distinct but hard-to-define form. This form is also echoed in much public relations writing. Australian journalism has writing conventions different from those in other countries, but in no country are the conventions rigid and unchanging. Journalistic writing always evolves. However, some usages persist long enough to be seen as firm rules. Hard news writing that is based upon news values (see Chapter 12) is perhaps the most robust form of journalistic writing, and tends to be quite prescriptive; that is, the rules of what not to do tend to outweigh what is allowed. Hard news writing is formulaic, and the formula exists to ensure rapid transfer of information. The long-standing principle of hard news is that it gets to the point without delay (no 'burying the lead') and sticks to clear and simple expression even if the story itself is complex. For some, this form of writing makes for pared-back eloquence, and is perhaps the pinnacle of the journalist's craft (see section on the 'inverted pyramid' below).

THE ALL-IMPORTANT 'LEAD' IN NEWS WRITING

The first sentence of your news story should be an information delivery system that gives the reader the encapsulated point of the story. You should rely upon your key questions here: who, what, when, where, how and why, with particular emphasis on the 'what'. Do not 'bury your lead'—that is, place the real point of the story in paragraph five, six or seven with a lot of peripheral information first. A well-trained journalist gets the lead up front, and an experienced sub knows when a lead is not where it should be. The lead becomes instinct after a while. At the start of your journalistic career, though, filter the information carefully to ensure that you are highlighting the lead effectively. If you

fail to put the lead first, you will hear about it from a sub, and the published or broadcast story might look entirely different from your original.

Short words

News writing convention leads to a variety of consequences for the reporter, who must try to eliminate long, Latinate words and opt for short Anglo-Saxon words as much as possible. Instead of ‘commence’, choose ‘start’. Instead of ‘prior to’, use ‘before’. We are fortunate in some ways to have a multifaceted language that has drawn on so many other languages. Because English is rich in synonyms, often there is a short version of a word that will convey the same meaning as the longer word. Short words tend to be more instantly understandable. Also, in print media space is limited, and short words use up less space. A common misconception suggests that sophisticated writing requires lots of long words and convoluted sentence structures. This is not so: the best writing conveys complex ideas in simple language.

This drive for short words is particularly evident in tabloid headlines. Words such as ‘probe’, ‘fury’, ‘shame’, ‘agony’, ‘bid’ and ‘joy’—short, emotive words that are easy to fit into a newspaper layout—are in popular use, and are often derided and satirised as well. ‘Star’s Shame over Baby Agony’ is the kind of headline that has a familiar ring. Journalists working in the quality media may not necessarily choose the shortest and most emotive tabloid words, but the general rule is to always keep your journalistic writing simple and straightforward. Some of the world’s best writers are to be found in journalism, or at least in the more exalted forms of it. George Orwell’s writing is well known not just for its profundity but also for its brevity, clarity and crispness. The best of news language displays these characteristics.

Redundancies

One quick way to simplify your own or other people’s writing is by eliminating redundancies. For example, there is no need to write ‘completely destroyed’; just write ‘destroyed’. The same goes for common redundancies such as ‘this point in time’ (write ‘now’), ‘join together’ (‘join’), ‘serious fatality’ (‘fatality’), ‘killed dead’ (‘killed’), ‘4pm in the afternoon’ (‘4pm’) and many others. Subeditors go looking for poor writing of this kind, and ruthlessly eliminate it. Verbal economy becomes second nature for those who become good subs.

Strong words

As mentioned in Chapter 14, good journalistic writing is driven by verbs: strong, meaningful, well-chosen finite verbs that power your sentences and give you the ability to tell precisely what is happening. Journalists tend to rely upon unambiguous verbs such as ‘attack’, ‘punish’, ‘insist’ and ‘remove’. Also important in news writing are powerful, straightforward nouns, such as ‘death’, ‘lie’, ‘war’, ‘prison’ and ‘murder’. News is often about harsh realities. Journalists tend not to write that people ‘passed away’. **Euphemisms** like this, and others such as ‘expecting’ instead of pregnant or ‘put to sleep’ instead of euthanased, are not part of journalistic convention. Again, subs are alert to

#Euphemism: A mild or vague word or phrase that is used instead of a blunt, harsh word.

the softer language of other forms of communication and will alter text to more closely match the real circumstances being described.

Tone

The tone of media writing can be important. A light tone is not acceptable for a story that contains tragedy, for example. But if a story is whimsical or comical in some way, a solemn, sombre tone won't be right either. Judge the nature of a story to assess what the tone should be. The right tone is especially applicable to the headline. Setting the wrong tone in the headline can seriously compromise the ability of the story itself to deliver its message.

Also be aware that words often have both denotations and connotations, and understanding both forms of certain words may be an issue. Take the example of 'green'. This word means the colour green, but it has political and social connotations as well. In some contexts, it could be taken as derogatory or dismissive, but it could be taken the opposite way in other contexts. A word such as 'claimed' might be problematic for news journalists. In some contexts it is quite straightforward, but in others it will connote the idea that someone has something to hide. Often, bias is betrayed in your use of adjectives and adverbs—these are the words that add colour to nouns and verbs, so do be sparing with them. For example, the sentence 'The government has introduced legislation decriminalising the use of some drugs' is neutral, but see what happens to the tone when modifiers are added: 'The government has irresponsibly introduced legislation decriminalising the use of some socially devastating drugs.' Subs help ensure that words are deployed carefully, mindful of all their possible interpretations and potential for bias. A neutral tone is usually needed for hard news writing.

Somewhere between conversational and formal

News writing is not strictly conversational, even though it needs to be simple. Conversational writing is often too vague to work in journalism. Spoken language lacks the formal grammar of properly written prose, and may be filled with slang or other kinds of vernacular. Just listen to random conversations in your everyday life and you will hear sentence constructions that would not survive a subedit. Journalism requires efficiency and precision, qualities often lacking in general conversation. Informal, conversational chat between people who know each other can be filled with verbal short cuts and repetition, because much in conversation is either understood or redundant. Overly informal writing is just as bad as stuffy formal writing, though people new to journalism sometimes transfer their usual forms of speaking into their written work. Journalistic writing must strike a balance, because it must be neither forbidding nor hard to read. Subs are on the alert for writing that is stilted and filled with long, Latinate words. A sentence like this would be taken apart and put back together by a good sub:

The background information has been perused and organisational activities preparatory to the initiation of the four component phases of the project being contemplated at this time have been instituted.

CONVENTION

Inverted pyramid

The best known of all journalistic conventions is the inverted pyramid form for news stories (see Chapter 2), which enables stories to be cut from the bottom to accommodate the constraints of page layout. This practical consideration has helped shape the well-written news story into a finely honed method of efficient communication, by placing information in a hierarchy. The inverted pyramid is not generally chronological, because the emphasis is on the most important fact or event, not the first. This story structure begins with the intro or lead, which will always answer one or two of the classic journalistic questions: 'Who?', 'What?', 'When?', 'Where?', 'How?' and 'Why?' (Usually 'what' and 'who' take precedence.) The body of the story follows, revealing more details of the story and answering all the rest of the questions. While some news organisations have proclaimed the death of the inverted pyramid, news of its demise may be premature. The inverted pyramid remains a remarkably efficient way to convey information, and it seems unlikely that it will disappear altogether, even as more narrative formats arise.

Paragraphing and sentence length

Journalistic convention on most major Australian newspapers dictates that each sentence in a news story will be its own paragraph. This format is not the norm in other countries, but is well established here. Journalistic convention used to dictate that lead paragraphs in newspapers were no more than twenty-five to thirty words. This standard has become more liberal, as a skim through the daily press will show. However, keeping your sentences short is still advisable, particularly your lead sentence. In fact, the whole story will read better if it displays a combination of short and longer sentences. Avoid sentences that exceed fifty words, unless there is a compelling reason to go so far overboard.

Attribution

Using the word 'said' is considered to be neutral and without value judgment, and therefore journalistically sound. Mainstream journalistic convention in Australia bars most synonyms of the word 'said', and it is considered acceptable to repeat this word, in a journalistically conventional pattern, throughout a story. This news convention differs from some elements of the non-mainstream press, where you will find people quoted who 'offered' or 'grumbled'—as in "I didn't think it was a particularly good game," he offered'; or "That wasn't such a great movie," she grumbled'—usages that are patronising, value-laden and a little twee. Media releases should follow this convention, as they should be written in strict journalistic language. Similarly, public relations practitioners should not attempt to strengthen an assertion with a value-laden attribution word (such as 'insisted' or 'hailed'). This tends to put journalists off.

Direct quotes

All newspaper stories that are not just one-paragraph brief items contain direct quotes of some kind. They are often worked into the piece at around about paragraph four or five, and are usually

introduced by some indirect speech that sets the scene. The same applies to media releases. You place the quote first, then the name and position of the speaker. Make sure that you get the punctuation around direct quotes right. Here is a correct pattern:

‘The research so far is showing promising results,’ project leader Professor Carol Smith said.

‘We plan to begin a new trial next year,’ she said.

‘We hope to have a new treatment on the market by 2015.’

Third person

Journalistic writing is usually third-person writing, certainly in the case of news journalism. This style is the journalistic way of removing the writer from the action. The news reporter must keep some distance from the matters being reported, even if the ideal of strict objectivity cannot be attained. The use of first person ‘I’, ‘me’, ‘we’ and ‘us’ can be annoyingly cosy, but paradoxically alienating for the reader. Also, using the second person ‘you’ in news writing may be patronising: ‘How would you feel if you had been in that car crash?’ or ‘These measures mean the family grocery bill can be reduced to something you can afford.’ Consumers of news don’t want to know what the reporter does or thinks, or to be told in the second person how to feel or think. News is about things happening in the world—to people other than the reporter.

There are exceptions. For example, the rules change in the case of certain kinds of feature writing. First-person features are increasingly common, though ideally they should still be about the activities of people other than the reporter. They can show the reporter’s response to events, but should not put the reporter at the centre. The kind of journalism that has the reporter as the main character in the story is problematic, though it can be worthwhile if done by a skilled writer who has a good reason for being at the centre and about whom the reader will actually care and be interested. First-person writing is not, however, generally a form recommended for those beginning in journalism.

Upper case

Journalistic writing in Australia tends to minimise use of upper case, reserving it only for the word at the start of a sentence and for proper nouns. In practice, this means that reporters and editors do not capitalise words such as manager, scientist, chief executive or other words that describe professional roles, for example. Overuse of capitalisation tends to make written work look like it comes from the era of Queen Victoria. Even if an organisation you are reporting on uses capitals when describing its chief financial officer, for example, journalists and subeditors are under no obligation to do likewise. Different newsrooms may employ different styles when it comes to writing about state or territory governments, although in general it would be common to talk about the New South Wales government or the chief minister of the Northern Territory, applying proper noun status only to those words that are true proper nouns.

Headlines

Headline writing is quite an art. This task usually falls to the sub—reporters rarely write headlines. This is so that the subs, who are at the centre of the production process, can apply consistent standards and have some overview of the whole publication. Certainly on newspapers it is the only practical way to operate because reporters usually have no way of knowing how much physical space can be allocated for a headline, or indeed for the story (news flash reporters: your stories are going to get cut). Headlines certainly have to fit a particular space. But they also will have to fit the story well. This requirement means really understanding the story before you attempt to write a headline for it. If you are subbing and come to a story that you don't understand, read it again until you do. If you still don't understand it, maybe there is something wrong with the story and you will need to discuss it with the reporter.

The headline must use few words to provide maximum information. Concise writing is always difficult, and headlines must be extremely concise. Concise does not just mean brief—it means comprehensive as well. News headlines mostly take the form of a sentence, which means that they should have a verb. However, they also use a kind of headline shorthand, in which some function words are skipped—and sometimes even the verb is implied rather than stated. For example:

Fred Nurk happy to remain in middle order

This headline has an implied verb: 'is'. As readers, we mentally insert the verb so that the sentence makes sense.

Most headlines, though, will have an actual verb, even if other words are implied. For example:

China, Japan resume talks

This extremely concise headline has a verb, 'resume', but a function word (the conjunction 'and') is implied. This headline also contains a wealth of information and its meaning is instantly understandable.

Headlines on feature stories often do not contain verbs (or implied verbs), but are instead often noun phrases. For example:

Land mines: weapons of cumulative mass destruction

Headlines generally do not contain numerals and have minimal punctuation. They do not have full stops or exclamation marks at the end, and rarely will have question marks. Australian media tends to minimalise capitalisation in headlines as it does for body text, so keep the capital letters only for the first word of the headline and any proper nouns. Most important of all, make sure always that the headline properly represents the story. Headlines have the capacity to be extremely misleading. Subs must understand the story well to write an encapsulation of it. A good sub takes the trouble to understand, even when under considerable time pressure. Sub editors should always endeavour to make stories better than the original copy. Eliminate errors in the text; make sure you don't put errors in. Don't be afraid to change a person's copy, as long as you change it for the better. Don't just change for the sake of change—always have a reason for changing text. The old Hippocratic Oath that doctors take also applies here: first, do no harm.

Style

Most media newsrooms, public relations offices and other professional writing settings in the media use a style guide of some kind to guide staff writing. **Style** is a combination of grammatical rules, journalistic convention and the individual preferences of news editors, chiefs-of-staff or managers. Reporters should get used to adapting their writing according to a set style. Professional communicators need to ensure that their work does not contain elements that may confuse or irritate the reader. Clear, correct style is essential in this process. While some rules of journalistic writing are common across most Australian media organisations, there are often individual differences between outlets that mean you have to change your writing (or the way you edit) depending upon where you work. For example, **house style** will differ between broadsheets and tabloids. There are also substantial differences between newspapers and magazines, and between print and broadcast media. Some style guides are extremely detailed and helpful, while others are just sketches. The point of a style guide is to get all journalists on a publication—or public relations people writing media materials or publications—heading in the same direction, employing correctness and consistency. The main style gatekeeper in news is the subeditor, but all journalists are expected to help out by producing what is known as ‘clean copy’—copy on which the sub doesn’t have to waste precious time correcting small grammar or style errors. The same goes in a public relations office, where a senior manager is likely to fulfil the gatekeeping role, and would be much obliged if the public relations officers took care with their original copy to minimise the possibility of errors passing through unnoticed.

Some common elements in media style guides

As mentioned above, elements of style can vary quite a bit, within and between various media outlets or public relations offices. The style elements below tend to be fairly common in many settings and are useful to know (keeping in mind the need to adapt to a particular house style).

Numbers

- Standard newspaper number style is to present one to nine in words, then 10, 11, 12 ... in numerals.
- Sentences should not begin with a numeral.
- When writing journalistic copy, use a comma between numbers greater than 999 (1,000, 10,000, 100,000, etc.) but for book publication, use a comma between numbers greater than 9999 (10,000, 100,000, etc.).
- For millions of dollars, use \$10 million.
- Avoid using numerals in headlines.
- Dates should be either day–month–year, such as 2 August 2016, or month–day–year August 2, 2016. Never use the 2nd of August.

Words

- Most Australian media environments use standard Australian spelling, not American spelling; for example, colour, harbour (not color, harbor), travelling (not traveling) and catalogue (not catalog). Use centre and theatre, not center and theater. Never use gotten instead of got.
- Use -ise, not -ize; for example, in recognise and organise.

- Dr, Ms, Mr, etc. should not have a full stop.
- NSW, QC and other acronyms should not have full stops between letters, and should not have apostrophes for plurals (QCs).
- Minimise the use of capital letters, and use them only to start proper nouns or the first word of sentences.
- Avoid synonyms of ‘said’, such as ‘added’.
- Do not use whilst, amidst, amongst or similar archaic forms. Use while, amid and among instead.
- Do not use alright; use the correct term, all right.
- ‘Last’ does not mean the same as ‘past’. For example, do not write, ‘That is the way we have done it for the last century.’ This means the last, then no more. You should write, ‘That is the way we have done it for the past century.’
- Some pairs of words are habitually confused; make sure you are not one of the offenders. These pairs include affect/effect, alternate/alternative, bought/brought, censure/censor, compliment/complement, disinterested/uninterested, home/hone, imply/infer, mitigate/militate, practice/practise, prescribe/proscribe and refute/dispute. If unsure, always look them up.

Symbols

- Use ‘per cent’, not ‘percent’ or ‘%’.
- If you need to distinguish between Australian dollars and the currencies of other countries, use \$A100 for Australian, \$US100 for American or \$NZ100 for New Zealand dollars.
- Use ‘km’ for both singular and plural forms of ‘kilometre’; for example, ‘The house was one km from the shop’ and ‘The house was 10 km from the shop’.
- The same applies for the abbreviations of measurements such as millimetre, kilogram and metre.

Punctuation

- Exclamation marks are generally not used in either journalistic or public relations writing.
- Use double quotation marks (“”) around direct quotes and single marks (‘’) for quotes within quotes. Note: this usage in newspapers and magazines is the opposite of the usage in books published in Australia (including this one), where single quotation marks surround double quotation marks.
- Do not use a comma between the subject and verb of a sentence unless it is to insert a non-essential phrase or clause, and therefore ends with a comma: ‘The woman, who was increasingly impatient, waited in line.’ In this case, the phrase ‘who was increasingly impatient’ must be opened and closed with a comma to mark the fact that it is an addition to the sentence that could be removed without damaging the S–V–O sentence structure (see Chapter 14 for more on the S–V–O structure).
- Always use apostrophes correctly. Not to do so can seriously impair one’s credibility, as well as create confusion. Correct apostrophe use dictates that apostrophes are used when indicating a contraction (‘It’s a nice day’) or for noun possession (‘The woman’s book’). Note that possessive pronouns do not take apostrophes (‘The cat chased its tail.’). See Chapter 14 for more on apostrophe use.

Clichés

A simple rule: don't use clichés. Therefore, you will avoid the following:

- size is not important
- strutting her/his/their stuff
- mum's the word
- shaken not stirred
- in the nick of time
- at the end of the day
- [...] is the new black
- anything being dubbed [something]-gate, such as Camillagate or Walleagate
- the humble [potato, bedspread, kitchen cupboard or whatever]
- if you think [something], then think again.

There are many other examples, all regularly featured in lazy journalism and mediocre writing. Care enough about your writing and editing enough to employ originality. Clichéd writing may be fast but it is always dull.

THE FINAL TEST

The final product of subediting should be a compact, effective bundle of information that conveys a readily understood message to the reader. Most newspaper readers skim, often just reading the lead para, and will only linger on certain stories that grab them. To try to win the attention of the reader, your job as sub is to do most of the work first. The reader should never have to struggle to understand any aspect of the story. The final test of whether your story is effectively edited is to ask: is it immediately comprehensible? If you can pass this test, then you will have succeeded at subediting.

DIAGNOSING COMMON LANGUAGE ISSUES

When you choose a career that depends upon writing English, you will encounter a whole world of grey areas as you attempt to negotiate a complicated and diverse language. Some of the contentious issues you will find don't necessarily have clear-cut solutions. Even if you don't agree with some hard-line points of view on these usage issues, knowing a bit about them will help you decide how to proceed. Here are a few of the more common issues.

Split infinitives

'Don't split infinitives' is a rule you will often hear. The split infinitive is a controversial issue, and you will find vehement opinion on both sides of the argument. Some people maintain that it is an arbitrary, meaningless rule imposed by horrible, prescriptive grammarians wedded to Latin and unable to cope with the 21st century. They also generally have no friends and wear hand-knitted grey cardigans. Others think that splitting an infinitive is always poor writing, and indicates a lack of sensitivity to the language and a general lack of education. Most writers concede, though, that sometimes, for grace and clarity, you may need to split an infinitive.

What is an infinitive? It is a kind of verb, distinct from the finite verb (see Chapter 14). Among its distinguishing characteristics, it does not indicate tense or the singular or plural form. An infinitive is often (though not always) made up of the word ‘to’ and the so-called dictionary form of a verb, such as ‘be’. The most famous infinitive of all is found in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*: ‘To be or not to be.’ In English, words change their shape for various reasons, and we call this inflection. The dictionary form is the uninflected form. So, for example, the word ‘run’ can be inflected to ‘ran’, ‘runs’ and ‘running’. Its dictionary form will always be ‘run’. Its common infinitive form is ‘to run’. In this case, the second word in this construction never inflects—you can’t have ‘to ran’, for example. This is one of those little tests we have in grammar to see if the correct word has been selected. In the case of infinitives, see if you can inflect it. If you can’t, then it may be an infinitive. Note that infinitive verbs cannot provide the ‘V’ part of an SVO (Subject–Verb–Object) sentence; only finite verbs can do that.

The world’s most famous split infinitive comes from the classic television series *Star Trek*, in which the denizens of the USS *Enterprise* vowed ‘to boldly go where no man has gone before’. Here the adverb ‘boldly’ has found its way between the two elements of the infinitive. Grammarians around the globe clicked their tongues at that one, and the more fervent almost certainly boycotted the show forever more. According to Bruce Kaplan (2003):

In the publishing world, a split infinitive usually shows that the writer does not understand a basic rule of grammar. Veteran editors on the receiving end of split infinitives can sometimes be seen waving their arms, shouting or sobbing at their desks. These guardians of language purity are the true believers in the crime of the split infinitive. So in your own interests, when writing or editing your own or someone else’s work, do not split the infinitive.

But that timeless classic of English, H.W. Fowler’s *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage* (first published in 1926, and the latest edition in 2006), defends splitting the infinitive in certain cases. In making his case, Fowler divides the English-speaking world into five classes: those who neither know nor care what a split infinitive is, those who do not know but care very much, those who know and condemn, those who know and approve, and those who know and distinguish—a useful and accurate division. He reserves his scathing wit most for those who rant about not splitting the infinitive while not really knowing what an infinitive is or why splitting it is a problem. Moreover, he says that sometimes, to match the natural rhythms of English, it is far better to split an infinitive than to slavishly keep it intact. Note that the use of the term ‘to slavishly keep’ is a split infinitive. Not splitting it would result in wording like this: ‘It is far better to split an infinitive than slavishly to keep it intact.’ Which sounds better? You decide.

Whatever you decide to do, do it knowingly. That way, when a grumpy old sub questions your defiant split infinitive, you won’t be taken by surprise and say something lethal like: ‘What’s a split infinitive?’

Ending with a preposition

‘Don’t end a sentence with a preposition.’ This is just as controversial an edict as the one about the split infinitive. Subeditors regularly have conniptions over this one too, but there are many dissenters. Winston Churchill famously mocked someone who criticised him for ending with a

preposition with the line: 'That is something up with which I cannot put.' By *not* ending with a preposition—in other words, saying the sentence the way strict grammar pedants would be forced to say it—Churchill showed that the strictly correct form can sound pretty silly. However, many writers would feel uncomfortable ending sentences with prepositions like this:

That is the house I live in.

Rosa had no one to work with.

The rule about ending with a preposition arises because a preposition is supposed to be placed before a noun, a role implied in the literal meaning of the word preposition (pre-position). A preposition is a class of word that governs relationships between the content words (see Chapter 14). The nouns behave in certain ways, depending on what the preposition makes them do; for example, the correct form is not 'above ice' or 'in ice', but 'on ice'. If the preposition is the last word of a sentence, obviously it does not appear before a noun.

There are arguments for saying that this doesn't matter. Here is Fowler (2006) again:

It was once a cherished superstition that prepositions must be kept true to their name and placed before the word they govern in spite of the incurable English instinct for putting them late ... The fact is that ... even now immense pains are sometimes expended in changing spontaneous into artificial English ... Those who lay down the universal principle that final prepositions are 'inelegant' are unconsciously trying to deprive the English language of a valuable idiomatic resource, which has been used freely by all our greatest writers except those whose instinct for English idiom has been overpowered by notions of correctness derived from Latin standards. The legitimacy of the prepositional ending in literary English must be uncompromisingly maintained ... In avoiding the forbidden order, unskilful handlers of words often fall into real blunders.

Strunk and White, in *The Elements of Style* (2000), write:

Years ago, students were warned not to end a sentence with a preposition; time, of course, has softened that rigid decree. Not only is the preposition acceptable at the end, sometimes it is more effective in that spot than anywhere else. 'A claw hammer, not an axe, was the tool he murdered her with.' This is preferable to 'A claw hammer, not an axe, was the tool with which he murdered her.' Why? Because it sounds more violent, more like murder.

Like the split infinitive, ending with a preposition is something to be aware of (or something of which to be aware) but not necessarily cowed by (or by which not necessarily cowed). Use your writer's ear to find what sounds more graceful and vivid.

Mixed metaphors

Don't mix your metaphors. Metaphors can be a wonderful explanatory tool. They work really well for many kinds of writers, whether working in fiction or in journalism. In a metaphor, one thing is likened to another: 'my love' to a 'red, red rose' (Robert Burns). Similarly, a cat in a box becomes a metaphor for an unseen physical principle called uncertainty (search online for Schrödinger's Cat to see one of the most famous uses of scientific metaphor). Skilful use of metaphor can lead to

vivid writing or useful explanations, but you must beware the unintentionally hilarious misuse of metaphors, which tend to render your words risible rather than rousing.

Apart from the tendency of metaphors to descend into cliché when you are not looking, they can also cast doubt upon your abilities to write eloquent and coherent prose. Consider the following example, from Fowler (2002: 350), who is quoting a political speech:

No society, no community, can place its house in such a condition that it is always on a rock, oscillating between solvency and insolvency. What I have to do is to see that our house is built upon a solid foundation, never allowing the possibility of the Society's lifeblood being sapped.

Oscillating rocks and sapped lifeblood: the metaphors are ridiculous together. Sadly, this sort of writing is remarkably common, even in prestigious outlets. Consider the following from Revkin, in the *New York Times* (11 June 2001):

Over all, many experts conclude, advanced climate research in the United States is fragmented among an alphabet soup of agencies, strained by inadequate computing power and starved for the basic measurements of real-world conditions that are needed to improve simulations.

Make sure you know when you are using a metaphor (people don't always realise this) and that you haven't mixed it with something that doesn't make any sense. Seeking out and removing mixed metaphors is part of the quality control process.

Dangling or hanging modifiers

Some sentences have additional information placed at the start, in the form of a participle phrase or some other kind of modifier. This kind of phrase must attach correctly to the sentence proper. If it doesn't attach properly, the problem is known as a dangling or hanging modifier (or dangling or hanging participle). Here are some examples:

- Having written the essay, the lecturer complimented the student on her strong argument.
- After being convicted of robbing a bank, the judge sentenced Joe Bloggs to five years in jail.
- Climbing to the top of the building, the city stretched out before us.

These sentences contain nonsense, because the modifier that begins them is incorrectly attached. The first sentence here is really saying that the lecturer wrote the student's essay, which was surely not the writer's intention. The second sentence says that the judge was convicted of robbing a bank, while the third sentence says that the city climbed to the top of the building. Remember that the participle always relates to the first available noun or pronoun. For these sentences to be made correct, they will have to be restructured. There are different ways to rewrite all these sentences. Here are some possible options:

- The lecturer complimented the student on the strong argument in her essay.
- The judge sentenced Joe Bloggs to five years in jail after Bloggs was convicted of robbing the bank.
- When we climbed to the top of the building we saw the city stretched out before us.

Tips

Make sure you always:

- turn your words into galley slaves: they must do your bidding; to have this level of control over your words, you must know the purpose of each one
- observe the work of great writers and think about how you can incorporate their techniques into your own writing
- recognise the power inherent in using language in the public sphere, and take it for the serious task that it is
- understand any rules you are breaking before you break them. If you don't, it will just look like you didn't know what you were doing.

Make sure you never:

- sit down to write without access to a dictionary
- just place apostrophes randomly, hoping they are more or less okay
- fall into the lazy habit of writing a cliché when a fresh expression will enliven your work
- submit a first draft—writing can always be polished, even in a high pressure environment.

And to really shine, you should:

- find joy and satisfaction in your writing, beyond just completing a functional task. When you do this, hopefully your readers will feel the same way.

CONCLUSION

Media writing always has a public role, whether it is for a newspaper, a magazine, a film script or a media release. Communication barriers are common as we share information around many different contexts and individuals in society. Professional writers strive to minimise those barriers inherent in our multifaceted language. Due attention to good grammar, combined with an understanding of relevant language and style conventions, and an appreciation of eloquence and grace, will assist in turning you from a dabbler to a professional whom employers are willing to pay.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The subeditor is often the custodian of a publication's language and style, and is charged with overseeing language correctness and consistency and adherence to deadlines in newsrooms.
- Subs act as gatekeepers, preventing unwarranted, inaccurate, stupid, illogical, tasteless or actionable words being published or broadcast.
- Good subediting brings ordinary text to life, eliminates irritating or confusing language, and helps break down the inevitable communication barriers between the producer and the consumer of information.
- Aim not only for the lofty goals of eloquence and correctness of language use, but also for the more pedestrian virtue of consistency, to ensure that your readers are not irritated or confused.
- Accuracy of content is a central issue: there is no substitute in journalism for accuracy for both reporter and subeditor.
- Attention to detail, such as ensuring that names are spelled correctly, is the mark of professionalism and non-negotiable in this form of work.
- Hard news writing that is based upon news values is perhaps the most robust form of journalistic writing, and tends to be quite prescriptive; that is, the rules of what not to do tend to outweigh what is allowed.
- News writing convention means that the reporter must, for example, try to eliminate long, Latinate words and opt for short Anglo-Saxon words as much as possible.
- George Orwell's writing is well known not just for its profundity but also for its brevity, clarity and crispness. The best of news language displays these characteristics.
- Journalism relies upon strong nouns and verbs, and tends not to use euphemisms.
- Ensure that you get your tone right. A light tone is not acceptable for a story that contains tragedy. If a story is whimsical or comical in some way, a solemn tone won't be right either.
- Journalism requires efficiency and precision, qualities often lacking in general conversation. Therefore, journalistic writing is not conversational, but midway between conversational and formal.
- The inverted pyramid structure for news stories enables stories to be cut from the bottom to accommodate the constraints of page layout.
- Use 'said' as a neutral word to convey attribution, and always use direct quotes in stories other than single-paragraph brief items.
- Headlines must use few words to provide maximum information.
- Most professional communication settings use a style guide of some kind to guide writing. Style is a combination of grammatical rules, journalistic convention and the individual preferences of news editors, chiefs-of-staff or managers.
- English presents a variety of language issues, such as split infinitives, ending sentences with prepositions, mixed metaphors and dangling modifiers. Understanding these and other language issues builds professional knowledge and competence.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Why should journalists and subeditors heed the rules of grammar and punctuation?
- 2 What are the main tasks overseen by subeditors, and why are they important?
- 3 Describe the main characteristics of the most robust form of journalistic writing: news.
- 4 What are the main considerations in headline writing?
- 5 What is a style guide and how is it used?
- 6 Subedit the following two news stories and write headlines for both. Both stories are intended for publication in tomorrow's *Cityville Reporter*. The first story should stay roughly the same length or slightly shorter, while the second story should have approximately 150 words removed. Both stories have had deliberate writing and style errors placed in them.

Story 1 (295 words)

[HEADLINE:]

Some of Queensland's most influential business people will be in Cityville next week for a first-hand look at one of the states fastest-growing business region. Local businessman Roscoe Kray of recruitment firm Big People will host a special regional syndicat meeting of The Managers' Institute (Queensland) to discuss business issues relating to local and international markets.

Mr Kray says the fact that some of the state's most influential Manager's were coming to the city showed the profile Cityville was nationally achieving.

National real estate firm Ramona International yesterday named Cityville as the number one regional property hotspot in Australia ahead of Hervey Bay, Ballina, Darwin, East Gippsland, Yippon, Coffs Harbour, Woolongong and the Tweed Coast.

Those attending the Cityville visit on the 24th and 25th of September include the heads of major international companies such as Boeing, Pizza Hut and the Body Shop.

The Managers will feast their eyes on a cruise around Ion Island and network with local business people before and ahead of a formal meeting of the institute on Tuesday.

Managers Institute chair Addie Higgs said: "By taking our business leaders outside of the traditional metropolitan hub we hope to foster greater business communications and increase the opportunity for growth across the entire state"

Ms Higgs says she hopes to improve her understand of the area and network with like-minded people.

"Thanks to modern technology and the increasing connectivity of regional areas such as Cityville, the opportunities for networking and skill-sharing across the state are now greater than ever before," she said.

The Managers Institute are Australia's leading network of senior managers formed across a diverse field of industries and business enterprises.

Comprised of almost eight-hundred members, personal and professional growth to enhance current and future leaders are fostered by the institute.

Story 2 (432 words)

[HEADLINE:]

The \$75M Peakland apartment project is on the up and up in Alpine St.

Sydney developer Con Constance Constructions has begun the first concrete pour for the basement floor of the twelve-level, 73-apartment building.

Foundation works have also started on an adjoining \$40 million, 11-level, 40-unit tower project on Axiom Street, called Manifest also being developed by Con Constance. Work is hoped to start soon on a proposed 102-berth marina on Digger Creek.

Con Constance Queensland manager Bert Harold says the concrete pour marked the start of construction of the gold-star luxury unit project including ground floor restaurant and hotel facilities. He said the work was proceeding ahead of schedule for completion before Christmas next year.

Mr Harold said: "We are very confident in the project and the economy of Cityville

"The sales so far show there is a good market here."

Con Constance sales and marketing manager Leesa Buckley confided the group had secured sales on thirty-seven apartments in Peakland worth a total of about and approximately \$35 million.

Prices ranged from about 850,000 dollars for a two-bedroom apartment and from \$950,000 for a three-bedroom apartment. The top price recorded so far was \$2.25 million for a sub-penthouse. Two penthouses on the top floor were expected to attract significantly more than that, Ms Buckley said.

Most of the buyers indicated intending to be owner occupiers.

Con Constance construction manager Kevin Datto said demolition of the former Blithe Hotel property and excavation had gone smooth. About 60 people were working on the site at present, a number which was expected to grow to 250 to three-hundred people as the job progressed.

Mr Datto said the group would endeavour to source as many tradespeople as possible from the Cityville area.

However, it was likely some tradespeople such as tilers and gyprock workers, would have to be sourced from metropolitan centres.

"There are a few trades that you have difficulty finding throughout Queensland so you have no choice but to go to the cities to source them" he says.

Cityville will add another tower crane to the city's skyline shortly. A 750 Marvelco crane with 44m boom was expected to be erected in the next five weeks. Mr Datto stated the company would complete the structural work on Peakland and move straight on to the Manifest building.

Mr Harold said approval for the 102-berth marina was expected in the next two or a few weeks.

The marina would have its own body corporate and births would be sold separately from the residential projects although he expected unit buyers to also seek marina berths.

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16

SPECIALIST REPORTING: DOING THE ROUNDS

LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

Young journalists entering the profession are wise to keep their options open and gain an overview (generally through a cadetship) of what reporting can offer. However, there usually comes a time when you will be ready to work at a deeper level than is possible through general reporting. The general reporter quickly and efficiently has to cover a wide range of breaking stories, from a cat up a tree to a local government resolution to a robot landing on Mars. By contrast, a specialist reporter narrows the focus to a particular field and adds depth. Reporters do not always have a say in exactly which speciality comes their way; indeed, they may arrive at work one day to find they are the new court reporter and are due at a rape trial in 20 minutes. (Part of the fun of a career in journalism is its unpredictability.) Also, in many cases reporters, as part of their training, are assigned to a succession of rounds to gain specialist knowledge in each. Eventually, many reporters settle in one particular area, building their expertise and becoming increasingly adept at spotting stories on the horizon in their field. Many media outlets capitalise on the knowledge bases of their roundspeople and cultivate an image of authority and expertise in areas of greatest interest to their audiences. Media outlets value roundspeople who have

made a name for themselves in their specialities and have developed great insight and competence. Roundspeople tend to be more autonomous than general reporters and have greater capacity to drive the news agenda, rather than simply responding to daily events. The most useful roundspeople will be alert to breaking news, will recognise new developments and will appreciate the complexity of these developments when they arrive.

In this chapter we look at:

- how you may progress through your journalism career by taking on a specialised round
- why you do not need to be an expert in the subject to become an effective roundsperson
- how the best roundspeople become part of the milieu of their round
- how you can guarantee effectiveness through actively seeking to increase your knowledge
- some of the particular issues and dilemmas often faced by police roundspeople
- the issue of culture clashes between media and the fields they must cover as roundspeople
- why you may wish to consider becoming a specialist journalist in the trade media.

MOVING ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

If you join a metropolitan media outlet as a cadet, you will probably be called upon to do many types of reporting tasks. These might include weather reports and stories about accidents, local politics, birthdays of people turning 100 and the local agricultural show—sometimes even cooking up the astrology column. In other words, you may be called upon to cover a whole range of things that will give you the broad experience and knowledge that journalists must develop. This is part of what being a journalist is about: being able to ask the right questions and write about things that you didn't know about before—and without delay. A cadetship ideally provides a solid foundation and a capacity to develop quick-wittedness, self-reliance and assertive confidence, qualities that are valuable for all reporters.

You will want to give some thought to a long-term career path, and as you develop your professional experience you will seek to cultivate your expertise. Journalistic expertise is often best developed and cultivated in a **round**. Once you progress through the ranks of journalism and begin making your mark, it is likely that you will be given a round to cover. In the USA, this same role is known as a 'beat'. This work does tend to provide long-term job satisfaction because you will be able to delve more deeply into an area than you can as a general reporter. To do it well, you must become immersed in your round.

Contemporary media outlets in Australia have become increasingly diversified, embracing more rounds than ever before. At one time, it was not unusual for a reporter to remain a generalist throughout a long media career, and some still do. But there is an increasing demand for specialists who can provide in-depth coverage of a particular area. Both kinds of journalist are necessary, according to Osmond:

You've got to have the generalist philosophy, which says basic journalistic training can be applied to any field, regardless of the content. But then you've got to get a bit more realistic and concede that the world is very complicated and there are highly specialised and highly technical fields all around us ... That's the point at which generalists' skills may break

Round: A form of reporting where the journalist specialises in a particular subject area and covers that area in depth. Examples include court or police rounds. This same role is known as a 'beat' in the USA.

down because ... it requires knowing a specialised field on its own terms and within its own discourse, being able to work within the discourse, but also to translate it into a more general kind of intelligibility. (Osmond 1998, quoted in Tapsall & Varley 2001)

The most common rounds in Australian newsrooms are:

- courts
- local government
- police
- sport.

While these are found in most mainstream media outlets, the big newspapers and broadcasting newsrooms now have many other rounds as well. These may include:

- business
- defence
- economics
- education
- environment
- health
- law
- lifestyle
- religion
- science and technology
- transport.

Major newspapers may have 20 or more rounds. Have a look at a metro paper, such as the *Australian* or the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and identify the rounds those papers maintain. As Conley (2002) points out, among the most sought-after rounds are those involving foreign postings, and the big media organisations often have specialist reporters stationed in, for example, Washington or London. Often, when you are a roundsperson, your byline will describe you as a correspondent, as in 'Science correspondent Freda Nurk'. This should not imply that being a roundsperson is the same as being a columnist. Columnists provide analysis and comment and are often senior editorial staff or, indeed, people from outside the newsroom, such as academics, politicians or well-known pundits. As a roundsperson you will generally be expected to write news and associated features, although on occasions—and if you are extremely experienced—you may be allowed to include a comment piece in a sidebar next to your main story. Smaller regional newspapers or broadcast outlets may well give you more responsibility, more quickly, than a metropolitan outlet would. Do not get the wrong idea that reporters are often called upon to put forth their opinion. Opinion column writing remains a minority activity in mainstream media journalism, even if it has grown to dominate much online media.

CRITICALLY READ THE ROUNDSPEOPLE

To understand more about how roundspersons in the media operate, select a mass media outlet (either print or broadcast), identify a roundsperson in a subject area that interests you and follow that person's output over a period of time (say, one week). Notice how the person writes, how they source



their stories (can you detect the presence of PR material, or are they apparently generating stories independently?), the depth of their knowledge base and whether it is apparent to you that they are breaking stories or reacting to issues already in the media. Choose a particular story and investigate it yourself, finding out as much information as you can that it is in the public arena. For example, if it is a health story see if you can source any original documents relating to it from the federal or state department or a research organisation, and see whether you think the roundsperson has interpreted the facts accurately.

NOT AN EXPERT

Becoming a roundsperson in the first place does not mean that you are an expert in that topic—or even have much of an interest in it. You might just happen to be there when the editor wanted to assign a new roundsperson. Former science editor of the *New York Times*, Cory Dean, had been a Washington-based political writer, but then the managing editor of the newspaper saw her in the cafeteria with a copy of the magazine *Scientific American* under her arm. Suddenly she was in charge of a highly respected, 24-page, weekly science supplement in one of the world's leading newspapers. She had to learn quickly, on the job. Such is the fate of all journalists—you are constantly having to learn new tricks. In Ms Dean's case, she did it so well that she developed an interest in a scientific subject herself and went on to publish books on coastline management. While you may certainly express an interest in a particular round, and the editor may be receptive, on the whole the forces that dictate the allocation of rounds in the mainstream media may well be outside your control. Go with it and enjoy the fact that you get to learn a whole new range of knowledge that you never knew existed. It could end up being an unforeseen and ultimately fortuitous fork in your particular road.

BECOME PART OF THE FURNITURE

Being assigned to a round means that you have to become, in many ways, a part of the milieu of that round. In other words, if you are an industrial roundsperson, then you will be a familiar figure at Trades and Labour Council meetings, at individual union and employer group meetings, at strikes, rallies, media conferences and announcements, and in the corridors and offices of the people from whom you obtain your news. A local government roundsperson attends all relevant meetings, announcements and events, and will have a contact list filled with relevant local players and a head filled with detailed knowledge of local issues. A science correspondent will hang out in laboratories, talking to scientists and reading their published papers. She will attend important scientific conferences and become familiar with the current controversies, conundrums and important personalities. A court reporter will be at court most days of the week and will also cultivate a range of sources among the practitioners and academics relevant to the field. He also will know how to read a court transcript. A court reporter will pay careful attention to detail and, of course, will understand the implications of not being able to record events in court using a tape recorder. Excellent listening and note-taking abilities go with this patch, as does a solid

understanding of the law and its conventions. The court reporter may also be called upon to report more broadly on issues in the justice system.

You can see that as a roundsperson you will need to know the lie of the land, and to understand the issues of the round, so that you will know about stories before they break, and will be able to write about them in a well-informed manner.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

You may have to do a great deal of your own background reading and other research to get yourself familiar with the territory you will be expected to cover. A courts roundsperson, for example, would be well advised to revise the laws of *sub judice*, defamation and other matters relating to the coverage of legal matters (see Chapter 18 for an overview of need-to-know legal information). Journalists who breach the laws of *sub judice* while covering a trial may be responsible for the whole trial being aborted—this has happened many times in Australia. In extreme cases, journalists can be found to be in contempt of court and be sentenced to jail when convicted of this charge. There is a good reason that media law is a compulsory part of most journalism degrees or majors in Australia. These issues are not trivial in journalism generally, but knowledge of them is an everyday necessity for courts roundspeople. You also need to be aware that as a court reporter you will have no more rights to interact with the courts than any other member of the public, and you will not necessarily be granted any special access. However, in practice, courts often do provide areas in courtrooms that are set aside for reporters. Most court reporters adhere to the conventions and courtesies of courtroom life, including bowing their heads slightly towards the magistrate or judge upon entering or leaving the court.

As a roundsperson you have a serious responsibility to understand what you are dealing with in your round. The courts round is the most obvious example of this, owing to the potentially severe penalties for getting it wrong, but the same goes for the other rounds as well. You need to understand the basic issues and the major personalities, and you must be able to recognise a big story when you see one developing. You should be able to avoid having too many surprises sprung upon you if you are an effective roundsperson.

One of the most important tools for the roundsperson is the telephone. You will have to develop a network of contacts in your round, and ring them frequently—sometimes every day, in the case of police roundspeople—to keep abreast of developments. According to experienced Australian television police reporter Mike Smithson, quoted in a profile by Williams (2009), ‘Unless you’ve got good contacts, all you’ll be doing are the bleeding obvious stories, the stories that everybody else does. If you’ve got good contacts, you’ll be doing the extraordinary stories.’

Further, it helps to cultivate the support staff of your contacts. Executive assistants, administrative officers, research assistants, information officers—these people usually are repositories of information and generally are able to facilitate access to your main contact. Sometimes the support staff will have all the information you need anyway, so you won’t need to go any further. They may, for instance, be able to provide you with a report you are looking for, the name of a person who has been involved in a project, or the date of a forthcoming international conference. One note of

caution—do not try underhanded or aggressive methods to get support staff to provide you with information. You may harm them greatly if they give you information or documents that they are not supposed to give out, potentially causing both professional and personal problems for them. Keep your dealings ethical.

According to Conley (2002: 170), the rounds system establishes a ‘knowledge bank’ for a media organisation, and information is channelled accordingly. The chief of staff, or whoever is running the newsroom, will automatically direct incoming material on a particular topic to the relevant roundsperson. A round, says Conley, tends to give reporters a sense of autonomy and responsibility. Often, it means they are left alone to pursue their own priorities. When assigned a round, a reporter should chase up every clipping file (whether physical or electronic) related to the round for background on issues and develop a good understanding of how their media outlet has dealt with these stories in the past. The new rounds reporter should contact key news sources to organise meetings to familiarise each with the other. Gaining the confidence of sources and being able to talk to them freely are crucial to successful rounds work. Reporters must quickly grasp how the system of their round works—the relevant processes, politics and personalities, and their interrelationships. Additionally, they must be sure to read all important documents related to the round, such as Royal Commission reports or Senate inquiries.

SPECIAL ISSUES FOR POLICE ROUNDSPEOPLE

One of the most common of all rounds—and one you are likely to encounter if are employed in daily journalism—is the police round. For many media outlets, this is where the action is. Crime has been a daily staple for media since media began. This is the very archetype of the hard news round and it calls for fast reflexes, quick thinking, ingrained ethics and a good nose for news. According to Conley (2002), police reporters are close to a community’s most dramatic events: murders, robberies, fires, sieges, traffic accidents and natural disasters. These are all well-established topics that the audience consistently wants to consume. Indeed, through monitoring emergency services radio communications (something of a legal grey area, but nevertheless common practice throughout Australian newsrooms), quite often the police reporter finds out about the latest crimes and crises at the same time as emergency services personnel. Needless to say, this requires a strong ethical sense among police roundspeople to ensure that this information is used responsibly.

Reporting on police investigations of crime provides essential media stories, but it can also throw up some challenges for the reporter who seeks to behave as a true representative of the Fourth Estate. Striking the right balance in reporter–police relations can be genuinely difficult. Reporters new to the speciality will be watched closely by the police to see if they are trustworthy, and are likely to be kept at arm’s length, at least initially. If there is no trust, there is no relationship. On the other hand, the reporter still has a watchdog role, even if she must work closely with the people being watched over. A reporter should never be a PR person for the police; a professional distance must be maintained. In some cases, reporters become too close to police sources who turn out to be corrupt. The infamous history of police corruption in this country is testament to the fact that many reporters have faced this very issue. If reporters have evidence of corruption, they may find themselves in a difficult situation of potentially losing the trust they had nurtured by

revealing the information they have. It is important to note that to conceal such information isn't an option, because this would make the reporter as culpable as the corrupt police.

'Moonlight State': a milestone in investigative police reporting



One of the most important pieces of investigative reporting ever conducted in Australia was the outcome of difficult, painstaking and personally stressful work by the celebrated reporter Chris Masters. His report, titled 'Moonlight State', aired on the ABC television current affairs show *Four Corners* on 11 May 1987 (view it at www.abc.net.au/4corners/stories/2011/08/08/3288495.htm) and followed dogged police reporting by *Courier-Mail* journalist Phil Dickie that had exposed high-level corruption. Masters's *Four Corners* report revealed the extent of police corruption in Queensland in that era. The day after the show went to air, a judicial inquiry was announced that came to be known as the Fitzgerald inquiry after its chair, Tony Fitzgerald QC. Eventually, over 100 convictions resulted from the Fitzgerald inquiry and the Queensland police commissioner Terry Lewis was jailed, along with three former state government ministers. The inquiry brought to an end the long reign of Queensland premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Bjelke-Petersen was charged with perjury over evidence he gave to the inquiry, but the jury in the case was deadlocked (and one member was later revealed to be a supporter of Bjelke-Petersen). No new trial was ordered.

For 12 years after 'Moonlight State' aired, Masters was caught up in defamation litigation related to the story. In 2008, in an essay in the *Griffith Review*, he reflected on what that story cost him (Masters 2008):

It was all hard labour, relentless and depressing, month after month, well into the night. Drug dealers and prostitutes don't keep office hours. They are not the most enlightening folk, and their stories are rarely uplifting.

During the subsequent defamation decade, there was no choice but to find the energy for the ordeal. The stakes were higher than the reputation of the program. The fight was about defending investigative journalism. The years reeled by. The ABC won. A retrial was ordered and the ABC won again. And by the time the century had turned, I was over my curiosity about the secret life of Queensland.

Police reporting throws up many potentially tricky issues to contemplate. For example, part of being a police roundsperson involves interviewing eyewitnesses to distressing events. You must be mindful of your ethical responsibilities that include considering the public interest issues around reporting grief (see Chapter 17). While you may certainly be persistent in obtaining all relevant eyewitness accounts to, say, a siege, a plane crash or a major flood, you must never hound people or pursue a sensationalist angle. Likewise, children who are eyewitnesses should be approached with extreme care, and there is an argument for not interviewing them at all in these circumstances. Your ethical decision not to interview children will generally be accepted by senior editorial management, so don't be afraid to make that decision. In the end, you have to exercise your own conscience and not step outside your own ethical boundaries.

THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN POLICE REPORTING

Another increasing issue is the rise of public relations in managing the flow of information. This is an issue in all rounds, but it can be a particularly vexing roadblock when dealing with police stories. Getting quick and decisive information on breaking crime stories is essential for the specialist reporter. While in many cases the staff of the police public relations (PR) unit will be allies for the reporter in getting exactly what is needed without delay, sometimes PR practitioners, often acting under orders from senior management, can act to block access and slow down the information-gathering process. As a specialist police reporter, you will need to deal with this issue and find ways to overcome this obstacle. There is no substitute for doing your job professionally and maintaining integrity and honesty—these are timeless qualities that will mark you as someone worthy of trust. PR that deals with sensitive areas, including crime, has more scope than other areas for over-protection and (occasionally) paranoia, so a reputation for being straight will assist you to get at the real story. You are under no obligation simply to obey police PR directives not to approach your own police sources for inside information. You should follow the story using all the ethical means you have at your disposal, and write it with honesty and without an external agenda. If the police PR unit helps you do to do that, then great, but if it doesn't, then you must go your own way. As always, you have to represent the interests of the general public.

PROFESSIONAL DETACHMENT

The most important feature of rounds is that you need to immerse yourself in your round, while still, of course, maintaining professional detachment from your contacts. The roundsperson role is an important one, because in a sense you become a part of the scene and, therefore, you are best placed to report on major developments in a depth that would not otherwise be possible. Therein lies something of a trap—a too-cosy relationship can sometimes develop between contacts and roundspersons, to the point where reporters may become reluctant to be frank about a developing story because of a sense of allegiance to sources within the sector. One criticism often levelled at political reporters who work out of the federal press gallery is that they live in press gallery world, where they work and socialise with the people they are attempting to scrutinise. This is not a trivial issue—objectivity can disappear when you become drinking mates with key players. While no one would suggest that you become a social outcast in your round, it is your responsibility to ensure that you do not lose your ability to report impartially and comprehensively.

FIT TO PRINT

A classic Australian book on the cosy relationship between press gallery journalists and politicians and their operatives is Margaret Simons's *Fit to Print* (1999). While some things have changed since this book was published, many things have stayed the same. This book is still worth reading by anyone wanting to specialise as a reporter, particularly if they want to specialise in federal politics.

CULTURAL CLASHES

In some rounds, the clash of cultures can require some careful negotiation. The media has a robust and demanding culture that sometimes does not sit comfortably with other professional realms. Arguably, the most striking example of this issue is the science round. In fact, the culture clash can be such an issue in this round that the relationship between scientists and journalists is often characterised as a war. While hostilities are not always overt, tensions are common. Journalists and scientists simply go about things differently. In 'Ending the War: How Scientists Do (and Don't) Communicate' (1999), Nicola Jones postulates that the conflict has at its centre a fundamental difference: 'While science and the media may share a common driving force of curiosity, they can differ greatly in their modes of operation.' It often comes down to the notion of educating the public as opposed to entertaining them; media activity is often more concerned about entertainment than education and many scientists have a real problem with this: 'Worse, journalists often see science as deterministic—something that can be summed up by a headline and leaves little room for qualifiers. Science, on the other hand, is fundamentally based on the principle that nothing is certain.'

There are misunderstandings on both sides. Often scientists are ignorant of how journalism has to function; that journalism has to bring difficult concepts down to a level of general understanding to produce something the public wants to consume. This lack of understanding about media among scientists is starting to change as communication and media courses for scientists are becoming common now. Some well-established courses in Australia teach scientists how to deal with the media and how to ensure that they get their message across in a media-friendly manner. Apart from teaching them how to guard against being made to look foolish, scientists are also taught to think up metaphors to explain their work and find useful ways to put their work into a context that the average person can understand.

A Dutch study (Willems, van Ruler & van der Veer 2002) looked at the communication barriers between scientists and journalists by surveying 744 biological scientists in The Netherlands. The team carrying out the study measured communication barriers by asking the scientists about their experience and attitudes concerning science journalism. The study found that there were fewer barriers between scientists and journalists than first supposed, though there were still some quite important ones. For example, the notion of 'gatekeeping' was indicated by scientists to be a problem and one area where they felt a lack of control about the release of their information. A significant proportion of respondents stated that the management of their organisation—or indeed their organisation's public relations department—made unilateral decisions about the release of information, rather than the scientists themselves, and they also had a problem with this. Many scientists in this survey felt that the agenda was out of their hands; that other people decided what should be public information and what shouldn't, and therefore they felt marginalised and disempowered.

The study also found that scientists had some 'unreasonable demands' that themselves created communication problems. These included the demand that journalists be comprehensive when writing about the results of research, or the requirement that scientists check the article before publication or that journalists must make all the changes the scientist wants. These sorts of attitudes have the potential to set up a tension between journalist and scientist that makes

fruitful collaboration more difficult. A process of negotiation usually gets around these common 'unreasonable demands'. Some science roundspeople are even prepared to show their articles to scientists before publication, on the strict proviso that only factual errors can be corrected. Showing copy to sources ahead of publication is an ethical issue for many reporters and newsrooms. In the case of the science round, it may be justified because the facts must be correct but are often well outside the reporter's experience.

A landmark report titled 'Worlds Apart: How the Distance between Science and Journalism Threatens America's Future' (1997) was prepared by veteran US NBC science reporter Jim Hartz and a former NASA scientist Rick Chappell, who spent more than a year examining science journalism. Their report found, among other things, that:

- 1 Only 22 per cent of 2006 adults polled in a National Science Foundation study could correctly answer at least seven of ten simple science questions, and less than half knew that it took the Earth one year to orbit the sun.
- 2 Scientists are more distrustful of journalists than are clergy, businesspeople, military personnel and even politicians. A survey of more than 1400 scientists and journalists found only 11 per cent of the scientists said they had a great deal of confidence in the media.

However, Hartz and Chappell found some reason for hope for an improved relationship. Although they found that two in five scientists said they were afraid of being embarrassed in the media, nearly three-quarters said that they wanted the public to know about their research. And 81 per cent of scientists surveyed said they would be interested in taking a course to improve their ability to communicate with the media and public. Hartz and Chappell also found that journalists conceded they had insufficient knowledge of science and the scientific method. The researchers recommended that journalists ensure that they understand the scientific peer review system to 'avoid overplaying questionable work'. They also said that publishers of scientific papers should require authors of papers to produce plain-English summaries of the research to put the work in perspective and explain its relevance. The researchers concluded that both scientists and journalists recognised the gap between them and wanted to bridge it, which was a necessary condition for positive steps forward.

The motivation behind the Hartz and Chappell study was the notion that the USA could lose its science and technology pre-eminence if science journalism was inadequate. In Australia, which is considered a disproportionate contributor to the world's scientific effort—it is often described as 'punching above its weight'—there are similar dangers. Research at the University of Technology Sydney, based upon interviews with scientists and science journalists, examined the competing cultures of journalism and science as part of a growing concern about inadequacies similar to those uncovered by Hartz and Chappell. This research (Reed 2001) acknowledged the longstanding tension and conflicts between journalists and scientists, while exploring ways to find common ground between the two: 'Since these differences and dissatisfactions [between scientists and journalists] are grounded in hundreds of years of acculturation which has become almost unconscious, there are no easy resolutions of the apparent tensions and conflicts.' Reed recommended 'greater intercultural contacts as well as intercultural communication skills' as one way to bring these two totally different cultures together.

A significant source of tension between scientists and journalist is a different understanding of deadlines. Journalists usually have to produce their output at a much faster pace than scientists

would ever have to do. A lot of scientists just can't get their heads around this one, and it can be enormously frustrating for journalists to make it clear to a scientist source that they can't wait until next year for the information—they actually need it right now. Reporters should not be overly aggressive, but there are times when you have to push diplomatically to get an interview or additional information, or to have your draft returned with corrections. This is a fundamental cultural difference and it tends to be solved by the journalist taking responsibility for negotiating a civilised but firm timeline.

THE JOURNALISM–SCIENCE CULTURAL DIVIDE ELUCIDATED

Scientists see science as a cumulative, cooperative enterprise; journalists like to write about individual scientists who have made a revolutionary breakthrough. Journalists like controversy; scientists thrive on consensus. Journalists like new, even tentative results with exciting potential; scientists prefer their results to go through the slow process of peer review and settle into a quiet, moderate niche in the scientific literature—by which time journalists are no longer interested. Scientists think that accuracy means giving one authoritative account; journalists feel that differing views add up to a more complete picture. Journalists' work has to fit the space available; scientists' academic papers can be of any length. Scientists work at the pace imposed by the nature of the research; journalists are in a hurry to meet a deadline. Scientists must qualify and reference their work; journalists have to get to the point.

Source: Shortland and Gregory (1991).

As with so much of human problem solving, it comes down to better communication. There is quite a gap between the professional lives of journalists and scientists, but it is not unbridgeable. Scientists sometimes have unrealistic expectations, and in effect what they want from journalists is that they be just like them. This is never going to happen. Journalists often want something different (but just as unrealistic) from scientists: a quick, easy and entertaining headline or grab as grist to the endless media mill. This will not do either. For science roundspeople to work productively with scientists, they need to give some thought to negotiating the gulf between the cultures so that both sides win.

SPECIALISING IN THE TRADE MEDIA

Traditional daily media is not the only way to specialise. There is a whole world of employment opportunities for specialist journalists in the trade media. The publications to be found in this sector are generally known only to professionals in particular areas. They are often available only by subscription and deal with sometimes highly specific topic areas—such as air-conditioner engineering, boat building, surfboard fabrication, cardboard box manufacture or organic farming—with correspondingly low circulation rates to a tight-knit audience. Some are rather broader, including various business and commerce journals, travel industry newspapers, science

and technology magazines, and the fashion industry press. These publications have launched many a glittering media career and should be weighed up as potential workplaces by aspiring journalists. An excellent listing of all publications in Australia, including some extremely specific and obscure publications, may be found in the Margaret Gee's *Media Guide*.

Working as a journalist on a trade publication can be similar to being a roundsperson on a metropolitan publication, and just as satisfying. Because they often have a small editorial staff, it is possible to be given quite a bit of responsibility quickly, as long as you do a good job and establish clear competence in the field. You may well find that more senior responsibilities come your way more quickly than might have been the case on a larger publication. You will also develop extremely good contacts and, if you want to move to the mainstream media at some stage, you will take with you an extensive **contact book**.

Perhaps one of the biggest ethical dilemmas facing specialist reporters on trade publications is the absolute requirement not to be swayed by advertisers. Often within the rather narrow specialities of the trade press, advertisers have considerable clout and may attempt to influence what appears in the editorial pages of the publication. This is a perennial problem in the trade press, but an ethical reporter will never be swayed by demands from advertisers either to report favourably on their new product or event, or to decline to report anything contentious or critical. The only possible exception to this is the so-called advertising feature (or advertorial), which is clearly identified as advertising and is combined with associated editorial that has been paid for as a piece of advertising. In the end, all publications, no matter how specialised, need to maintain high standards of objective journalism—and this means not being beholden to advertisers when it comes to accurate and comprehensive specialised reporting.

CONCLUSION

Reporting is a multifaceted occupation that has to span a range of topics few other professions require. While a reporter cannot be fully knowledgeable about all the many topics on the daily news agenda, she can find a niche in which the development of a knowledge base is encouraged and rewarded. Having a round is a great opportunity for a reporter and represents, in many cases, a step up the reporting ladder. It can also be the most satisfying kind of reporting, involving as it does a closer intellectual affinity with a topic area and a greater capacity to develop a depth of understanding and a more extensive contact base than a general reporter can hope to do. Doing it well will probably get you noticed within your media outlet and in the milieu of your round. This recognition brings with it a strong obligation not to be seduced by the entreaties from sources to neglect your professional ethics. You may also become uncomfortable with the idea of being typecast by your round and may seek to move around and try other fields; many journalists yearn for diversity, so this is fine too. In the end, though, most reporters enjoy the challenge and satisfaction of deepening their knowledge and expertise in a specialised field. Part of the excitement of this may even come from discovering that you are fascinated by a topic area you never thought about at all when you were at university. So keep an open mind and reap the rewards that are there to be experienced.

contact book:
electronic or hard
copy listing of journalistic
sources of information,
often with notations to
date the information.
Journalists refer to their
contact book regularly
when seeking comment for
stories.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The general reporter must quickly and efficiently cover a wide range of breaking stories, while a specialist reporter narrows the focus to a particular field and adds depth.
- Even if you start out as a general reporter, you may well progress to a round—and not necessarily one you know much about or are particularly interested in.
- A roundsperson should be able to see stories on the horizon before the general reporter is aware of them.
- If you are appointed to a round, immediately do your homework and determine the major current issues and key players.
- One of the most important tools for the roundsperson is the telephone. You will ring your contacts frequently to keep abreast of developments.
- Cultivate the support staff of your contacts, such as executive assistants, administrative officers, research assistants and information officers, taking care to always keep your dealings with them ethical.
- Striking the right balance in reporter–police relations can be genuinely difficult for the police roundsperson.
- The rise of the information control of PR is an issue in all rounds, but it can be a particularly difficult when dealing with police stories.
- As a roundsperson, you need to immerse yourself in your round, while still maintaining professional detachment from your contacts.
- In some rounds, the clash of cultures can require some careful negotiation. The media has a robust and demanding culture that sometimes does not sit comfortably with other professional realms.
- The trade media can provide excellent opportunities to develop a reporting speciality.

REVISION AND REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the essential differences between general and specialist reporting?
- 2 Why do you not necessarily have to possess existing knowledge to be appointed to a particular round?
- 3 Why do police roundspeople have to be especially careful about keeping a professional distance from sources?
- 4 What is a ‘culture clash’ and how can it interfere with a round?
- 5 Why are specialised, niche publications worth considering as a way to enter a journalistic career?
- 6 Choose a round that interests you, and compile a ‘dossier’ on it; for example, who are the main current players, what are the main issues, what are the best sources of information and how do you go about accessing that information?

- 7 This chapter has outlined the culture clash between the media and scientists. Identify another culture clash in a different area that might interfere with a roundsperson's ability to report effectively. See if you can find examples of a communication breakdown between the protagonists and what might be done to minimise or eliminate cultural issues if you were given that round.

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CASE STUDY 4

Guarding the Guards: Holding Democratic Governments to Account

Liz Tynan

Introduction

Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.

Winston Churchill, two-time UK Prime Minister

As we have shown in this textbook (see Chapter 3), in a democratic society the media ideally act as a watchdog over the holders of power in government, the legislature and the judiciary, in a role traditionally known as the Fourth Estate. The work of investigative journalists and whistleblowers has established convincingly that many things are done in the name of democratic societies, without the knowledge or consent of the population.

In recent times, the revelations of the American whistleblower Edward Snowden have blasted a hole in governmental secrecy, allowing the general population to peer inside previously hidden activities. The Snowden case has also served to demonstrate what can happen when journalists do not carry out Fourth Estate investigations and thereby become complicit in government secrecy. This case has demonstrated that the media must always challenge cover-ups. Democracy is not eternal; it has to be guarded and defended. Even in stable democratic societies freedom ebbs and flows, depending upon the temper of the times. For example, in the wake of the terrorist attacks in the USA on 11 September 2001, most Western countries—particularly the USA but also Australia and the UK—introduced legislation (or began enforcing existing laws) that removed some freedoms and introduced new powers of secret coercion and surveillance that had not been seen since the Cold War era.

Secrecy obscures undemocratic behaviour. The Snowden case is one of the most recent examples of this, but in Australia we don't have to look far to find another major instance of it: the British nuclear tests in Australia in the 1950s and early 1960s. The test authorities actively controlled media access and as a direct result the Australian public had no way of knowing what was being done on Australian territory. The Fourth Estate was absent, and as a result democracy was too.

Edward Snowden: Exiled whistleblower

Perhaps the most celebrated—and reviled—whistleblower of the modern era, Edward Snowden spectacularly revealed the inner workings of the post-9/11 US security network. In 2013, at the age of 29, he leaked hundreds of thousands of classified documents acquired primarily while working as a National Security Agency (NSA) contractor but also in other IT positions he had held in companies and agencies. The NSA was deeply involved in US security operations in the wake of the terrorist attacks in September 2001. The material, leaked to selected US journalists, showed that the US government was spying on its own citizens and those of allied countries. This surveillance included accessing emails, Facebook accounts and telephone records. For the first time, the world learned about PRISM, a joint US–UK security program to collect internet information, particularly material stored by Google and Yahoo!. The extent of surveillance was not known by the US population and Snowden's revelations were a genuine shock. Also, the USA suffered considerable international embarrassment when the leaked documents revealed that the country had spied on allies such as Germany,



Britain and France, and (more sensationally still) on the personal phone calls of leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Australia was rocked by the revelations, based on the Snowden leaks, that its government had listened in on telephone conversations of the then Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his wife, sparking a diplomatic crisis. Only a fraction of the documents allegedly obtained by Snowden have been disclosed so far. At the time of the Snowden disclosures, US President Barack Obama's deputy press secretary, Josh Earnest, was quoted as saying, 'The president welcomes a discussion of the tradeoffs between security and civil liberties' (Hemmer 2013).

Before the first stories appeared, Snowden fled from Hawaii to Hong Kong. Soon after, charges of espionage and money theft were drawn up against him in the USA, and it was clear that if he returned home he would be arrested. The US government cancelled his passport, limiting his options. He sought asylum in at least twenty-one countries. After considerable public speculation about his next destination, he ended up flying to Moscow and spent more than a month in the transit area of the airport before being granted temporary asylum by the USA's old Cold War adversary. At the time of writing, he had a job in Moscow and claimed to be comfortable living there. His longer-term future remains unclear, although he has indicated that he is seeking a permanent home in a European Union country, ideally Switzerland (Nebhay 2015).

Snowden has been interviewed several times since his leaked documents rocked the world and has spoken of his satisfaction with what he has done:

For me, in terms of personal satisfaction, the mission's already accomplished. I already won. As soon as the journalists were able to work, everything that I had been trying to do was validated. Because, remember, I didn't want to change society. I wanted to give society a

chance to determine if it should change itself. All I wanted was for the public to be able to have a say in how they are governed. (Gellman 2013)

Atomic-era secrecy

To quote from one of the journalists who wrote stories based on the Snowden papers, 'The documents leaked by Snowden compelled attention because they revealed to Americans a history they did not know they had' (Gellman 2013). The journalists, nuclear veterans, politicians and others who uncovered Maralinga did the same thing for Australia. Few Australians had any idea of our country's history at the centre of the nuclear arms race. Maralinga shows vividly what can happen if the Fourth Estate is not operating. The media at the time were remarkably obedient and largely published only officially sanctioned information about the tests. Only much later did the reality of the nuclear tests come to the attention of the Australian public.

It's worth recalling that this was the Cold War era, a time of growing international paranoia that would be echoed again after 9/11. During the 1940s and 1950s the two superpowers, the USA and the Soviet Union, had begun building nuclear arsenals. Nuclear spying certainly played a part in the Soviet Union rapidly matching the USA's nuclear capability. Because of various spy scandals, the USA shut down its joint nuclear weapon research projects. The UK was barred from working with the USA on nuclear weaponry, and sought to create its own weapons. In the early 1950s, the British swept into Australia with their bombs, their scientists and their military personnel determined to keep up with the arms race that they had helped to initiate during the Second World War.

Maralinga

Maralinga, or 'Fields of Thunder', was the name given by anthropologists to part of the traditional home of the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (also known as



#Maralinga: The nuclear weapons test site established in the South Australian desert where the UK tested seven major atomic bombs and conducted hundreds of smaller nuclear experiments between 1956 and 1963.

the Tjarutja] peoples, 1000 km northwest of Adelaide, on the verge of the Nullarbor Plain and just north of the Indian-Pacific train line. It is not the Indigenous peoples' own name for the area, but was borrowed from a Northern Territory language group to give a more colourful moniker to an area known

to surveyors simply as X300. The site was chosen by the leader of the British atomic weapons program, Professor Sir William Penney, and was to be a permanent atomic test location. In the end, it was active only between 1956 and 1963, but in those few years much radioactive material was released into the environment. The British atomic tests in Australia actually began when Britain exploded its first nuclear bomb, codenamed Hurricane, at the Monte Bello Islands off the northwest coast of Western Australia on 3 October 1952. In October 1953, more ambitious bomb tests had been held not far from Maralinga, at a remote location called Emu Field. At Maralinga, however, the British chose to establish the full infrastructure for extensive atomic weapons testing in Australia. The 3200-square-kilometre desert site was to be a permanent base for these tests, although it ceased operating in 1963 as new international bans on atomic weapons testing came into force.

When the then UK Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, wrote to Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 16 September 1950, seeking permission to use Western Australia's Monte Bello islands for atomic testing, Menzies was eager. The decision wasn't entirely sycophantic—there is evidence that Australia under Menzies had aspirations to become a nuclear armed and powered nation, and this was seen as the way in. Menzies may not have been expected to know just how tight the British would be with their information (but Menzies didn't ask too many questions either). Most of what Menzies agreed to was not publicised at the time, and, as the 1985 Royal

Commission into the British nuclear tests makes clear, there were active attempts to limit or deny media access to information. While there were some protests from the media about the silence that prevailed over the test program, on the whole not much got out and the Australian public was largely oblivious at the time. In the empty spaces of the huge desert test range, experiments on the destructive capacities of atoms proceeded without complete safeguards, including the safeguards afforded by public scrutiny and accountability.

Contamination

At Maralinga, a series of innocent-sounding 'minor trials'—as distinct from the mushroom-cloud atomic bomb blasts—released into the environment more than 20 kilograms of one of the deadliest materials known: a form of plutonium known as plutonium-239. Its radioactive half-life, during which it may cause serious illness in humans if ingested, is 24,000 years. These tests were code named Vixen B and involved non-nuclear explosions and deliberate destruction intended to test how bombs and related paraphernalia would behave if, for example, an aeroplane laden with nuclear warheads crashed on take-off.

At the conclusion of Vixen B, a substantial area around Maralinga was saturated in plutonium. Plutonium is picked up readily in dust and can swirl around the landscape, making it easily inhaled by anyone in the vicinity. If inhaled, it lodges in the lungs where it can stay throughout a person's lifetime, irradiating its surroundings and potentially causing lung cancer or other illnesses.

The limited coverage of the major bomb tests was tightly controlled by the UK and Australian governments, and the media did not undertake investigative journalism to more fully examine them. The minor trials were not covered by the media at all—not even superficially. Therefore, most people in Australia did not know that Australian territory had been significantly contaminated. Active measures were put in place by the test authorities



ensure, in particular, that Vixen B did not appear in the media. The Australian people did not find out about Vixen B until some important whistle-blowing and investigative journalism years later.

Maralinga uncovered

Revelations about Maralinga began in the mid to late 1970s, primarily driven by the whistleblower nuclear veteran Gordon Hudson and the federal Labor politician Tom Uren. Investigative journalist Brian Toohey was the first to break the Maralinga story for a broad national audience, through a series of articles in the *Australian Financial Review*. The series began on 5 October 1978 with a story based upon a leaked Defence Department Cabinet submission that had been prepared by the Defence Department under its then minister Jim Killen (Toohey 1978a). This story was widely picked up by the broader media and caused considerable consternation to the federal Coalition government of Malcolm Fraser. Toohey's follow-up story on 11 October 1978 hit even harder. This story put pressure on the Australian government to declare what it would do about the plutonium, since the British at that stage were refusing to remove it (Toohey 1978b). The British stance had been backed by a supportive statement from Australian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs Ian Sinclair, who played down any risks. Toohey was not deterred, particularly as the leaked Cabinet submission had made strong statements about the terrorist threat posed by the material at Maralinga. The 11 October story quoted a media release issued by Killen after publication of the first *Australian Financial Review* story, in which he also denied there was an immediate threat.

Upon publication of this story, Killen responded even more forcefully. He took the unusual step of castigating Toohey and the *Australian Financial Review* in federal parliament. The attack was detailed and sustained. Killen said that publicising any potential terrorist threat 'was an act of irresponsibility'.

In May 1984, when Toohey worked for the now-defunct *National Times* and a few months before the Royal Commission into the British nuclear tests began taking evidence, he also published a landmark feature on the legacy of Vixen B. The feature, titled 'Plutonium on the Wind: The Terrible Legacy of Maralinga', was the first detailed summing up of the Vixen B issue for a broad audience.

Toohey's coverage of the British nuclear tests in Australia was pivotal to this issue entering the public domain. Toohey's stories, and those that followed by other reporters, showed a much clearer understanding of the science and politics of the British tests than any stories published at the time. They were not dictated or guided by politicians or other authorities, and their sources included both leaked information and independent corroboration from scientists and test participants. The breakthrough investigative reporting undertaken by Toohey set a new standard for how the tests would be reported in the future, with a distinct Fourth Estate approach to keeping democratic government accountable.

Dirty Deeds: Ian Anderson and Maralinga

Ian Anderson's 1993 *New Scientist* story, 'Britain's Dirty Deeds at Maralinga', was the first journalistic story to show the full extent of contamination at Maralinga. This story had ramifications back in Britain and ultimately helped to force Britain to pay for a clean-up at the site. Observers and participants claim that Anderson's story created a particular moral atmosphere in 1993, opening up for public debate disturbing new information that raised fundamental questions about the very nature of the Australia–UK relationship.

Specialist journalists are (or should be) particularly good at cultivating excellent sources and Anderson had the best possible source for this story: the fallout expert and long-time secretary to the committee set up by the Australian government to oversee safety issues at Maralinga, John Moroney. Moroney, an Australian, was once a loyal servant



of the British test program, but later became bitter and disillusioned when he discovered how much he and the rest of the country had been misled. His painstaking work, in the three years or so before Anderson's exposé, provided the scientific basis for showing that the British had covered up the extent of plutonium contamination.

Moroney analysed about 2500 pages of declassified nuclear contamination data from trials in the USA that were almost identical to Vixen B, known as the Roller Coaster trials. In essence, he found that the British assertions about plutonium contamination at Maralinga were wrong by a factor of 10; that is, there was ten times more radiation at the site than had been claimed. This made the area much more dangerous than Australia had been led to believe, and impossible for the traditional owners to return without a proper clean-up.

When the *New Scientist* story came out, it sparked dozens of mainstream media stories and galvanised the Australian government. It was faxed to then Minister for Energy Simon Crean by his staff. The minister was in Europe with Attorney-General Gareth Evans, preparing for a meeting with their counterparts in the UK to discuss the continuing political fallout from Maralinga. An obituary for Anderson (who died prematurely in 2000) in the *Guardian* by Philip Jones claimed that 'his evidence, and the media attention engendered by the material in such a prestigious science journal, played a crucial role in the successful conclusion of the talks' (Jones 2000).

The outcome was payment by the British government of a total of £20 million (about \$45 million) to be used to clean up the site—about half the actual cost. Before publication of the article, a number of prominent UK parliamentarians had been asserting that Britain had no obligations in this matter whatsoever. However, a deal was struck on 19 June 1993 by senior ministers from both governments and a clean-up was eventually carried out.

Conclusion

When the media do not scrutinise government activities, governments are inclined to do things that they were not elected to do. The Edward Snowden case revealed a huge apparatus of covert surveillance that US citizens knew nothing about. In Australia, the British nuclear tests would become a study in the consequences of media absence. Long after the tests were concluded, journalists actively sought hidden information, cultivated informants and applied public pressure on politicians. In contrast with the complaisant media of the 1950s, the output of journalists in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s shows greater depth, sophistication and knowledge of the science, technology and politics of nuclear weaponry. Journalists were more familiar with the role of scientific issues in national affairs, more prepared to challenge official information and more skilled at digging for hidden information.

Skilled and motivated media are essential for keeping citizens informed and ensuring that democratic governments do not overstep the role entrusted to them. While many people complain about the activities of media, not having journalists means essentially that democracy can't exist, because no one is guarding the guards.

Of course, both the Snowden affair and Maralinga also reveal genuinely difficult public issues, such as at what point national security actually does require secrecy if citizens are to be kept safe. Revealing tactical and strategic information to enemies could be a really stupid thing to do. Where is that line to be drawn? These are issues for endless discussion in free societies, and all citizens should be able to participate.

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TOOLS 4

Writing Features

Liz Tynan

Introduction

Feature writing is the most varied of all journalistic styles. Many journalists enjoy this form of writing because of the scope afforded to them in choosing a topic and applying a broader vocabulary and more varied structure. Many kinds of features are possible, up to and including pieces that could be classed as literary. While journalists usually have more freedom of expression in feature writing than they do in news writing, this is not an invitation for undisciplined or self-indulgent writing. Part of the allure of features for the reader is being taken along for an exciting ride by a confident and skilled writer, who is aware that a good structure and engaging voice will instil confidence in the audience. The reader might not know where you are going, but hopefully they will trust you to get them there safely.

Feature writing complements the news

Features give depth, width, colour, gloss, sass, savvy, mind, heart and pathos to the media. They can give readers access to a level of understanding about a topic that cannot be achieved in the news format. Some use investigative journalism techniques in which the journalist finds, uncovers and elucidates hitherto obscured or disregarded information of great political, historical, scientific or social importance. Others explore the minutiae of individual experience to provide glimpses of private lives, traumas and triumphs. They may amuse or sadden, inspire or anger. They complement and extend the news, and are an indispensable part of public information as well as a great source of enjoyment for readers. As Ricketson (2004: 4) says, 'A first-rate feature can add almost as much to a newspaper as a breaking news story.'

Features cover a range of categories, although be aware that these have a tendency to overlap:

- news features, which flesh out a topic currently in the news
- investigative features, which uncover secrets and lies
- profiles, which reveal the lives of individuals
- human interest stories, which may be heartrending, gossipy or humorous
- special interest features, such as historical pieces, travelogues or how-to guides.

Pick up a broadsheet newspaper such as the *Weekend Australian* and see if you can identify all of these categories (and more). Hint: look into the 'Inquirer' section for news and investigative features and the colour magazine for profiles and human interest stories. Note how news features are almost always connected in some way to what appears in the first part of the paper, while other kinds of features may not be.

Structuring features

Once journalism students move on from the news story to learning how to write features, they sometimes become alarmed and confused that the strict forms of print news seem to be dispensed with, and that anything goes. That is not the case, as features have their own set of disciplines that do

differ from the disciplines of news. Versatility is a useful characteristic among journalists, so it is wise to cultivate the ability to flip between the different styles, as you may find yourself doing both news and features in your professional life.

News stories are almost always shorter than features, although supplying a blunt statement of relative word counts is tricky—there is simply too much variation. Mainstream hard news stories rarely exceed 700 words, and most are much shorter. Features cover a broad range, usually (in Australia) from around 800 words up to no more than 3000 words. The standout exception is the famous US literary magazine the *New Yorker*, which has been known to run features of over 30,000 words.

HIROSHIMA

The most famous of the huge features published in the *New Yorker* is the epic story titled 'Hiroshima', written by the American journalist John Hersey. This feature was a remarkable examination of the effects of the atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in August 1945 as experienced by a number of Japanese people. It took up the entire edition of the magazine in August 1946, the first anniversary of the bombing. The feature is 31,000 words long. It is well worth finding on the internet and reading, as it is a classic feature that is told using then-unusual narrative techniques that emphasised individual experience of the participants.

Another distinguishing characteristic is structure. Feature articles are not written in the inverted pyramid form. The inverted pyramid (see Chapter 2) is intended to provide an efficient and streamlined way of providing information. Features have more space and, while still demonstrating disciplined writing, can be more discursive. Features tell a more detailed and comprehensive story, and they often do so using narrative devices that are entertaining and interesting for the reader. For example, a feature may begin with a pungent anecdote or a striking direct quote. It may play around with timeframes, perhaps beginning in the present, and then moving to the past, then back again. Features usually balance out colour or evocative description with factual information—but be aware that they are always factual. In fact, the most entertaining and enjoyable journalistic features are grounded strongly in well-researched fact. This should give you the hint that while features may be creative in many ways, they are not flights of fancy or works of fiction. They are tied to reality and express facts about the world. Nevertheless, the story you tell may well take some twists and turns, like all good creative stories do. Stories can contain sudden surprises, revelations and wow moments. They can lead to a conclusion that you didn't allude to or reveal at the start. They can contain vivid descriptions of the people and places you are writing about. This is often best done using a strong structure that begins with a colourful anecdote, leads to statements about the factual basis of the topic, is bolstered and supported by a range of quotes from your sources, perhaps includes another compelling anecdote, then is wrapped up in a satisfying and circle-completing manner at the end. A structure such as this provides a rhythm to your piece, and is a helpful starting point. Experienced writers take pleasure in subverting the formula, but will do so in a knowing way.

Anecdotes

Anecdotes are vignettes: brief word pictures that describe an incident relating to your main theme. In feature writing they must be short and pithy, or they may become shaggy dog stories that try the reader's patience. Here's a brief guide to constructing anecdotes:

- Compose a simple story based on your interview or interviews and/or research.

- Flesh out the detail and character descriptions.
- Stay in one time and place.
- Use short quotes and facts if possible.

The following is an example of an anecdote used at the start of a feature by Greg Bearup in the *Weekend Australian Magazine*:

In June 2013 the comedian Charlie Pickering was in Paris with his new bride Sarah, attacking the Louvre. ... Pickering spotted his friend Shaun Micallef, 'a neatly dressed, daffy gentleman abroad' with his wife Leandra and their three boys ... It was a friendly encounter and they chatted amiably for five minutes or so. But Micallef was on a mission. He'd done his research meticulously and identified all the great artwork he wanted his kids to see ... He had then drawn a precise and intricate map, up stairwells and down corridors, marking out the most efficient route through the labyrinth. (Bearup 2015)

In anecdotes, things happen to people, or people make things happen. They can be encapsulated in a few words or they may extend to a few paragraphs. And, as Bearup's example shows, they give readers the capacity to imagine the scene. We can see the dapper Australian television personality Micallef with his plan of attack, on a mission to show his children the Louvre's art as efficiently as possible. The anecdote helps us to visualise the personality of the person who is being profiled. By helping us see things, anecdotes provide a mental landscape for the story that is to follow. When you read features in the media, watch for the many anecdotes writers use to help you understand the story. Here are a few examples of the kinds of action that can be conveyed using an anecdote:

- It is raining, and Mikhail Baryshnikov is standing in a courtyard in Riga.
- The villagers stood on the banks of the Bakun dam and saw hundreds of dead fish floating in the muddy water.
- When the verdict was read she started sobbing.
- In Andy Warhol's new loft studio, 'The Factory', Viva leaned against the whitewashed plaster wall, her cotton-candy hair bright blonde under the spotlights.

Creating compelling anecdotes does take some practice and sensitivity. Listen intently during your interviews, and follow up when you hear a good descriptive story developing.

Creating a theme

A good writer guides the reader through the story. One important way to do this is to ensure that you have a single, coherent theme that unifies the whole piece and that can make the reader feel confident they understand the landscape you will be traversing. Going off on tangents confuses the reader. Even as you surprise and delight your reader with new insights and compelling imagery, you must stick to a single context. A way to do this is to provide an overarching statement near the beginning that makes the theme explicit. A recapitulation of the theme in supporting statements further on will enable the reader to keep the context in mind. These statements should tie together the article and provide it with a fruitfully narrowed focus.

Each of the following sentences could work as a **statement of theme** in a feature story:

- The war in Chechnya was one of the world's most brutal conflicts.
- Several measures of social capital are on the wane.

#Statement of theme:

A summary sentence to remind the reader of a feature article of its main idea.

- Australia is under more pressure than ever to upgrade its military commitment in the Middle East as ISIS expands its territory.
- The San Bernardino Valley lies only an hour east of Los Angeles by the San Bernardino Freeway but is in certain ways an alien place.

A statement to set the theme doesn't have to be the first thing you write—use a good anecdote if you have one—but you will need to make a context statement somewhere in your story. Not placing a statement of theme might disorient your readers.

Quotes

While it may not exactly have eternal life, a media quote is not as ephemeral as most human utterances, so it should be carefully chosen. A **quote** is a statement attributed to someone. A direct quote is a verbatim statement in quotation marks. An indirect quote summarises what someone has said and has no quotation marks, but it still includes an attribution. We obtain quotes from the people we interview—the primary sources—or from secondary sources, such as published material.

Quotes give stories the voices of the participants and the commentators. They lend authority, colour and interest, and are essential in most journalistic writing—perhaps especially so in features. Record them carefully and reproduce them accurately. While you are doing your interviews, highlight in your notebook those quotes that strike you as the most vivid and insightful.

Here are some tips for using quotes in features:

- Choose quotes carefully, being mindful of their need to advance the story and add life and colour.
- Keep them short and to the point: avoid large slabs of verbatim transcript.
- Reserve especially pungent quotes to open or close your story.
- Edit quotes for grammar if necessary, but never distort the meaning or intent of the original statement.

Facts and figures

Your writing will benefit from a variety of facts and figures, which are a sign of research and will give your work solidity and authority. Wafty, unresearched writing is ultimately unsatisfying for the reader. Everything in a feature story has to be factual, even if the writer uses facts to structure a particular argument.

Facts alone, though, are rarely engaging. Some people call them factoids to disparage them, and certainly if they are used in a dull way they will, in fact, be dull. But they can be used to great effect by a skilled writer.

A feature about the effect of climate change on coral reefs, for example, will contain factual information on how corals are affected by higher temperatures and particularly the crucial symbiotic relationship between coral and algae that is damaged by warmer seas. It may also include information on recent large-scale coral bleaching events, a description of how the acidity of seawater affects animals that build calcium carbonate skeletons, and scientific projections on likely future scenarios. This is important baseline information you need to provide a foundation for the overall theme and for the anecdotes and colourful quotes that you provide. To persuade your reader that your feature is trustworthy, you must use accurate factual material.

Quote: A statement attributed to someone; a direct quote is a statement in quotation marks, while an indirect quote has no quotation marks.

Here are some tips on the use of facts:

- Don't overdo facts and figures but never omit the important ones.
- Avoid placing too many facts into one paragraph—spread them through the article.
- Obtain facts from authoritative sources.
- Always check that the facts are accurate.

Smooth joins

To create a coherent and enjoyable feature, ensure that you make seamless transitions between your anecdotes, your theme-setting prose, your quotes and your facts. The example below, from a *Vanity Fair* feature about the controversy that arose when the owner of the Beverly Hills Hotel in California, the Sultan of Brunei, introduced Sharia law to his country, shows an effective combination of various elements. Notice how you can picture the scene being set and also learn new things, while you are developing an understanding of the territory this feature is going to cover.

THE PINK AND GREEN BLUES

By Mark Seal

There was once a palace of movie stars and swimming pools, painted in shades of pink and green. A benevolent sultan with unfathomable riches from a faraway land bought it and lorded over its storied domain ...

For 102 years, the Beverly Hills Hotel coexisted in a storybook space. The city of Beverly Hills literally grew up around it, and the stars and power brokers of the city made it their second home. Then 'a grenade,' in the words of one of the hotel's principals, was hurled into the hotel.

Source: Seal (2014).



Show, don't tell

The **show-don't-tell principle** means that you use interesting material to illustrate a point rather than just bluntly state something you want the reader to know. For instance, in a profile, instead of just writing the bland fact 'Johanna Bloggs is great with children', describe a scene where Johanna is interacting with children. Then readers can draw their own conclusion about how the profiled person relates to children. You show action in scenes rather than give summaries of the outcomes of actions.

Elaborating the structure

Not every sentence in your feature story will fit neatly into the feature writing elements we have been looking at. One of the joys of feature writing is that there is more room to deviate from prescriptive forms such as news writing. But you must understand the notions of structure before you start mucking about with them. Undisciplined writing might be fun for the writer, but it is not much fun for the reader. You have a duty to your readers to perform a service for them, and part of that is the unspoken, unwritten agreement that you will take them on a journey that they can really enjoy without

#Show-don't-tell principle:

The advice given to all media writers to use interesting material to illustrate a point rather than bluntly stating something you want the reader to know.

feeling confused or alienated. So, keeping in mind your need to consider your reader, you can consider elaborating the basic structure in various ways; for example:

- When the basic elements are in place, you can build on them with passages of description and exposition.
- Beware of extended passages in telling mode, as there is a danger the feature story will then resemble an essay, an instruction pamphlet or an excerpt from an encyclopaedia.
- Always return to the basic elements, using description and exposition to occasionally fill in the gaps and provide background information.

The language of feature writing

Features are great vehicles for fine writing. You should aim for grace, economy, correctness and style, as in all your media writing. You can add compelling narrative and literary merit too—if you want to and if your editor agrees.

These writing tips may help (also see Chapters 14 and 15):

- Write in the active voice where possible; use the passive voice sparingly.
- Use concrete rather than abstract words and images.
- Edit every sentence for brevity and conciseness.
- Minimise adjectives and adverbs where possible.
- Remove redundancies and tautologies.
- Avoid exclamation marks.
- Avoid rhetorical questions.

As a general principle, simplify your writing as much as possible. Overblown, flowery and ornate language is not journalistic. Aim for clear, straightforward, tight language. This form of language is more likely to grab and hold the reader, and keep them enthralled to the end.

First person

The feature writer has more scope than the news reporter to engage personally with the story, and some choose to do this by using first person, placing themselves into the narrative. The trend to greater use of the first person in journalism is unmistakable and it would be wrong to counsel dogmatically against its use. Nevertheless, those new to journalism should proceed cautiously and ensure that the presence of the ‘I’ is justified by the theme and content of the article. Few articles are primarily about the reporter, so even if the ‘I’ is used, it will be there to show a relationship between the journalist and the main participants in the story, while still endeavouring to keep the focus on the participants. Friedlander and Lee (2004: 195) agree that the first person pronoun may be justified when the writer has personally experienced extraordinary events. Do not use the personal pronoun gratuitously—there must be a point to it. It must pass the ‘Who cares?’ test; that is, if there is no reason for the readers to care about the personal experiences or opinions of the reporter, there is no place for the personal pronoun.

Keep the ego in check

While we are free to push the limits of journalistic writing further in feature writing than we are in news, we are not free to be self-indulgent—a characteristic that irks editors (not to mention readers), and is to be avoided. Good editors like feature writers primarily to be *writers*: people who have talent for the craft of writing and a respect for its conventions and disciplines. Being paid to write can be a

difficult gig to get and to keep. Acceptance of the need to keep the ego within bounds is helpful for a long-lasting career.

The X factor

The best features have an X factor that, to the extent it can be analysed, is most likely a magical combination of logical and clever structure, fine language use, a great topic, thorough research, illustrative quotes and anecdotes, and a visual or mental landscape that draws the reader in.

Sometimes a mechanism for achieving this elusive quality is colour or atmosphere. To paraphrase Matthew Ricketson (2004), where hard news is about information, colour is about emotion. Colourful writing is not all of feature writing, and its scope may be limited, because colour alone does not give the full story. But where the use of colour works, stories are given an unforgettable quality that lives on after the reader has put down the newspaper or magazine. It is deceptively difficult to do well, because it depends upon the journalist's ability to observe and describe. To a certain extent, too, it depends upon the writer's sensitivity and depth of knowledge.

Being culturally literate really helps (see Chapter 15 for information on cultural literacy), to understand and use a wide range of references that add depth and nuance to your work. To illustrate this, here are the opening passages from a Clive James piece, 'Postcard from Japan 1: An Exchange of Views' (1984):

By courtesy of a British Airways Boeing 707 I was crossing in a few hours the same distance that cost Marco Polo years of his life, but the speed of modern travel has its penalties. Among these had been the inflight movie, which I dimly remember was about bears playing baseball.

From the air, Siberia looks like cold nothing. The Sea of Japan looks like wet nothing. But Japan itself, at your first glimpse of it, looks like something. Even geographically it's a busy place.

Immediately you are impressed by the wealth of detail—an impression that will never leave you for as long as you are there. Only a tenth of the land is useful for anything. The remaining nine-tenths, when you look down on it, is a kind of corduroy velvet: country so precipitously convoluted that the rivers flowing through it look like the silver trails of inebriated slugs. The useful tenth is inhabited, cultivated and industrialised with an intensity that boggles the Occidental mind. I have never seen anything like it in my life.

Seen from high up, the basic agricultural pattern of Western countries is of accumulated squares. America looks like a patchwork quilt; France like another quilt but with smaller patches; Britain like yet another quilt with smaller patches still. The basic agricultural pattern of Japan is of proliferating brain cells. Everywhere a rice paddy can possibly be put a rice paddy has been put, even if it is only the size of a table napkin.

Merging with this nervous tissue, like bionic grafts, are the areas of urban habitation and industry. One hundred and ten million live and work down there, most of them in conurbations which to the stratospheric eye look like infinitely elaborate printed circuits. You can tell straight away, before you even touch the ground, that in Japan there is nowhere anybody can hide. They're all in it together.

'Postcards from Japan 1: An Exchange of Views' by Clive James from *Flying Visits* published by Jonathan Cape (Copyright © Clive James, 1978) is reproduced by permission of United Agents (www.unitedagents.co.uk) on behalf of Clive James.

This amusing and insightful piece on Japan demonstrates a range of skill not limited to knowing how to write well. James also demonstrates historical and geographical knowledge, and an understanding of geopolitics, agricultural practices, electronic circuitry, arcane but apposite terminology (such as Occidental) and concepts in science, specifically neurology. His cultural literacy is considerable.

In other words, there is no point just observing if you don't have the knowledge to give flesh to your observations. You can look but you won't be able to see. And you won't be able to write. The James piece is simple in its words and structure for the most part, but that simplicity hints at a wide, sophisticated base of knowledge from which he is drawing. Being able to see the connection between the agricultural pattern of Japan from the air and the notion of brain cells is not a given. A prepared mind has to make that connection.

James has deftly provided the reader with a visual image of the country that he is about to explore. He has created an atmosphere of nervousness, multitude and elaborateness. After setting the scene, he moves to an amusing anecdote about his difficulties getting past Japanese officials at the airport, an anecdote made all the more effective by the atmosphere that has already been invoked. Anyone reading this feature will form an emotional connection as well as an intellectual one.

Conclusion

The Clive James feature demonstrates the essence of good feature writing: connecting readers to the subject matter. This is the whole point and ultimately the key to successful feature writing: you need to bring the topic to life for the reader, crafting your words so that the reader can see the events and the people you are evoking. There are few more enjoyable things to read than a well-written feature. The nice thing is that there are few journalistic tasks more enjoyable as well.

TIPS ON WHAT TO DO AND WHAT TO AVOID

Make sure you always:

- be mindful of the need for accuracy, as much as you must be for a news story
- find a workable blend of anecdotes, theme statements, quotes and facts to make a satisfying and well-rounded story
- choose quotes with care
- add colour by deep observation refined through cultural literacy.

Make sure you never:

- use a feature as an opportunity for an ego trip or a dazzling display of experimental grammar
- overdo the pronoun 'I'
- allow anecdotes to run on too long
- neglect the strict architecture of structure, even if you are subverting that structure.

To really shine, you should:

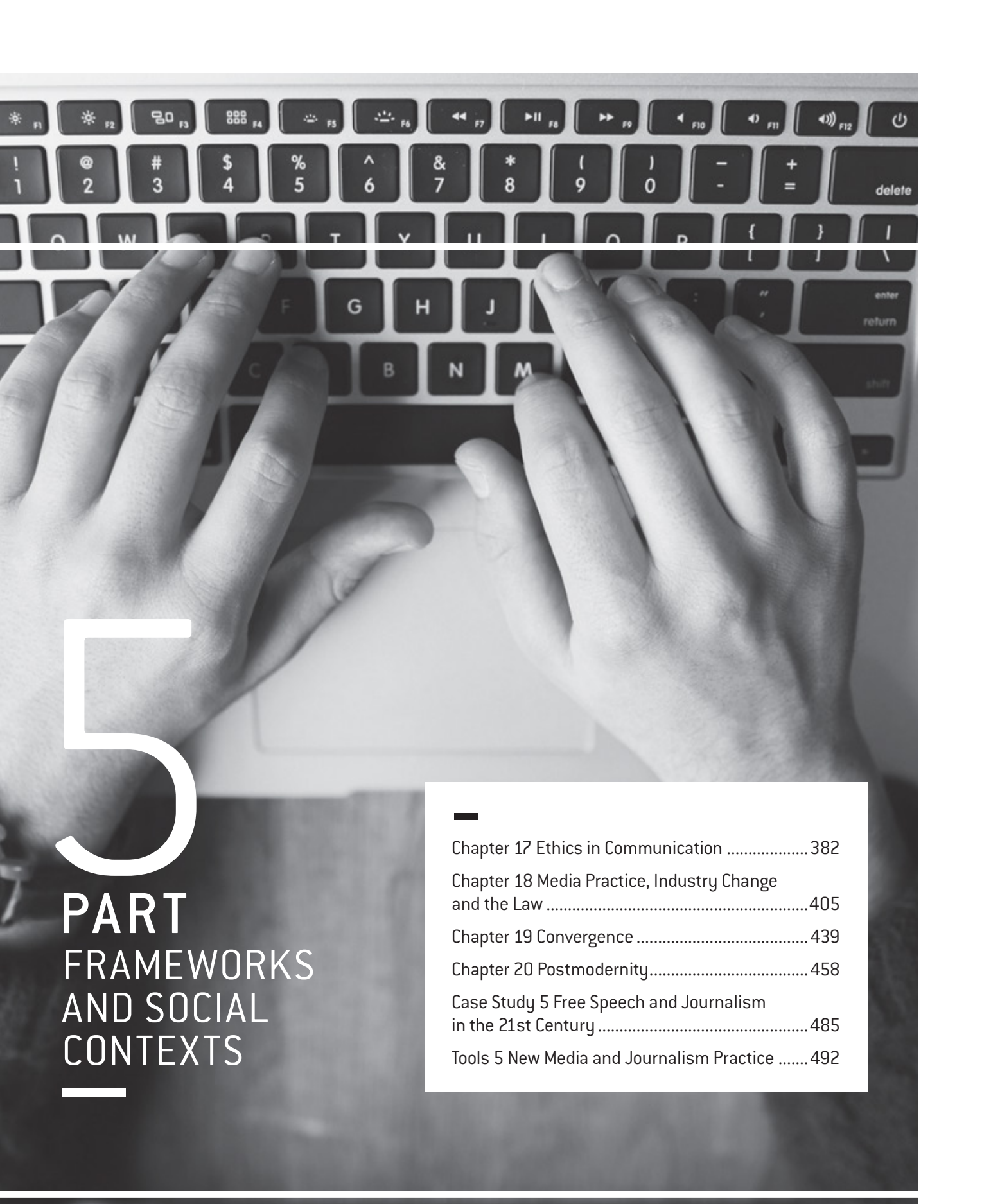
- keep in mind that features are an important part of the conversation of humanity, and they should be written with due consideration to their role.

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5

PART FRAMEWORKS AND SOCIAL CONTEXTS

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■

The history of media, both in terms of its development and research, is marked by a series of moral panics: moments of anxiety when media industries and media texts alike are accused of challenging societal norms and values and therefore contributing to the breakdown of society as a whole.

Media industries do not act unfettered. Aside from the watchdog role journalism plays, media operate in frameworks of legislation, regulation and obligation. Chapter 17 looks at Ethics in Communication. The implications of legal issues in the media are profound and Chapter 18 Media Practice, Industry Change and the Law provides the need-to-know essentials.

This section also reflects on the many novel and evolving aspects of the brave new media world. In Chapter 19, Convergence, we examine developing media intersections. In Chapter 20 we go on to examine the evolving relationship between media, society and culture that can be characterised as part of Postmodernity. This is an analysis of where media has come from, where it is now and where it might go in the future.

Case Study 5 (Free Speech and Journalism in the 21st Century) examines the notion of free speech and journalism in the wake of the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* killings in France; the jailing of Australian journalist Peter Greste and his Al Jazeera colleagues in 2013, and the 2011 conviction of outspoken journalist and blogger Andrew Bolt for racial vilification under s. 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.

Tools 5 (New Media and Journalism Practice) provides an overview of the new media tools essential to contemporary journalism. As we move into the second decade of the 21st century all professional journalists are expected to have the skills to produce news stories across multiple platforms (at the very least print and online). These new formats have put new demands on journalists and changed the way journalists go about their craft.

17

ETHICS IN COMMUNICATION

NICOLA GOC AND LIZ TYNAN

INTRODUCTION

Few areas in society are more subject to charges of ethical compromise than the communication professions, particularly media and public relations. These are major components of the public sphere, and encroach on people's lives in many ways. They deal in information, and that information can be manipulated for many purposes. Media and public relations practitioners have attempted to diffuse ethics-based criticism by producing codes of ethics that seek to monitor the behaviour of those working in these fields. Most practitioners also recognise that working sustainably and ensuring that the media and public relations play positive roles in modern society require a high standard of conduct. The record shows that only a relatively small proportion of media and public relations professionals actively seek to be unethical, but the intense scrutiny and visibility inherent in communication, and the power of what practitioners do, make these professions especially vulnerable to complaint in this area. This chapter examines the ethical issues at stake, and outlines the ways the professions attempt to deal with these issues.

This chapter looks at:

- ethics in journalism
- the core ethical issues facing journalists today
- codes of ethics
- ethics in public relations
- the public relations ethics backlash.

JOURNALISM ETHICS

Journalists, by the very nature of their work, interact with people and ethics is essentially about the way we connect with one another—so ethical decision-making is central to a journalist’s daily routine. Every report produced by a journalist involves a series of choices about who to believe, what to prioritise and how to frame the narrative. Journalists take upon themselves the role of moral arbiter in deciding whose bad behaviour to report and they have the power to do enormous harm and enormous good, as we have seen in Chapter 3’s analysis of the British phone-hacking scandal.

We have read in this book stories of journalists and media owners behaving badly and we all have our own stories of unethical journalism. In 2015, NBC news anchor, Brian Williams, was suspended for six months for what he called a mistake born out of a ‘fog of memory’. Williams was called out on an untrue account of being under fire in 2003. He claimed on several occasions that he was shot down in a helicopter in Iraq, but his story was revealed to be false by army personnel who were in the targeted craft. And who can forget the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal in the UK when it was revealed that the phones of members of the royal family, celebrities, sports stars, murdered schoolgirl Milly Dowler, relatives of deceased British soldiers, and victims of the 7 July 2005 London bombings had been hacked? Over the course of his testimony to the subsequent Leveson Inquiry, Rupert Murdoch finally admitted that a cover-up had taken place within the *News of the World* to hide the scope of the phone hacking. Media ethics isn’t just about journalists, but also about the behaviour of those who employ them.

So what does *ethical* journalism look like? A traditional definition of an ethical journalist is: ‘An impartial communicator of important news and views to the public and from the impartial perspective of the public; using responsible and accurate methods of newsgathering, for the sake of a self-governing citizenship’ (Ward 2009).

How should journalists both professional and amateur, navigate this ethical minefield? There is no simple answer. But first let us look at some of the theories about ethics that continue to inform ethics in practice today.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY: AN OVERVIEW

The three major schools of thought in modern **ethics** are deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics. **Deontology**, or rights-based ethics, tends to rely upon prescriptive arguments and rules, and is often, though not always, associated with various religions. In deontology, the underlying

#Ethics: A system of moral principles by which a person can judge right and wrong in any field; for example, media ethics.

#Deontology: Also known as ‘rights-based’ ethics; it assumes that each individual has certain rights, no matter the circumstances, and that no innocent person should be harmed or killed for any reason.

assumption is that each individual has certain rights, no matter the circumstances, and that no innocent person should be harmed or killed for any reason. Rights-based ethics features in many social questions, including euthanasia and abortion. In general, the deontologist would say that euthanasia or abortion should not be permitted, because an innocent person would be killed. However, a terminally ill person who is a deontologist might well claim a right to die as well, so you can see that it is not a clear-cut matter.

The second school, **consequentialism**, bases notions of morality not on a set of rules but on observing the outcomes or consequences of every separate action. Consequentialists weigh up the consequences of, for example, euthanasia and abortion, and decide where the majority of the benefit lies. They might well take the line that euthanasia is ethically acceptable, because it would lead, in the country's health system, to the unclogging of the system from one where people are needlessly being kept alive to a world in which fewer people suffer pain.

Virtue ethics may be identified as the approach that emphasises the virtues, or moral character, in contrast to the duties or rules (deontology) or the consequences of actions (consequentialism). Suppose it is obvious that someone in need should be helped. A **utilitarian** will point to the fact that the consequences of doing so will maximise well-being, a deontologist to the fact that, in doing so, the agent will be acting in accordance with a moral rule (such as 'Do unto others as you would be done by') and a virtue ethicist to the fact that helping the person would be charitable or benevolent.

These underlying principles inform much discussion around public sphere ethics, although they have much wider implications as well.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY AND JOURNALISM

The usefulness of moral philosophy in the practice of journalism can be illustrated through the contentious issue of reporting grief. When tragic events happen, they attract media attention. While many tabloid journalists long ago gave up any ethical considerations when interviewing grief-stricken people, responsible journalists need to weigh up whether reporting on personal grief will actually be of benefit to the community at large, and to consider whether their reporting may exacerbate the suffering of the grieving person. This issue provides us with the dilemma of rights-based theories versus consequentialism.

Journalists need to weigh up the public's right to know in making a decision as to whether to publish or broadcast a story about personal grief. They have to decide if the story is in the wider interests of the community. If they make the judgment that the public does have a right to know, the journalist then may feel obliged to file a report, even when the person concerned does not want their grief reported. Consider, for example, the case of the married man who is the victim of a serial killer who targets married men who frequent gay bars. The wife of the victim tells the media that for the sake of her four teenage children she does not want it known that her husband was frequenting gay bars. However, if the media comply with her wishes while the killer is still at large, they may be putting other potential victims at risk. If they do not report to the public that the latest victim was killed by a man who picked him up in a gay bar, it could be argued that members of the media are

denying the public—and particularly married patrons of gay bars—the right to be aware of the risk and take measures to protect themselves. If all the public hears about the case is that a man has been killed, but it is not told all the circumstances, are not the media taking a decision to put other people at risk in order to protect the sensibilities of one family? But what about the right to privacy of the wife and children of the family involved? Don't they have a right to their private lives being kept private and their grief remaining a private family matter?

Australian media professionals can be guided by their particular **code of ethics**. Journalists who are members of the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) are required to respect private grief and personal privacy. Clause 11 of the MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics states that journalists have a right to resist the compulsion to intrude. In such a case, individual journalists have to make a moral judgment—weighing up questions such as the greater good versus the right to privacy—and they generally have to make their decision within a very short time frame.

Deadlines deny journalists the luxury of time to consider such issues at length, which is why responsible journalists are constantly thinking about their journalism practice from within an ethical framework. Ethics in journalism is complex and challenging, and the best practitioners wrestle regularly with ethical issues.

#Code of ethics: A set of rules prescribing the ethical practices that all members of a profession should follow.

ETHICAL JOURNALISM

Although there are no easy answers, and ethical journalism is fraught with contradictions, ethical decision making and objectivity are worthwhile goals, even when journalists know that they are going to fall short of fully achieving them.

Kovach and Rosentiel

American journalists Bill Kovach and Tom Rosentiel were so concerned about the future of journalism that in the late 20th century they founded the Concerned Journalists Group, which aims to promote ethical journalism. Kovach and Rosentiel acknowledge that the concept of truth is no longer uncontested: 'We understand truth as a goal—at best elusive—and still embrace it' (Hargreaves 2003: 221). The journalists created a nine-principle manifesto setting out the values they believe the news media must adopt if they wish to be trusted and wish to fulfil the democratic mission of a free press. This rather old-fashioned mission statement offers optimism to journalists and journalism students who believe that the craft of journalism remains central to the existence of a democratic state:

- Journalism's first obligation is to the truth.
- Its first loyalty is to citizens.
- Its essence is a discipline of verification.
- Its practitioners must maintain independence from those they cover.
- It must serve as an independent monitor of power.
- It must provide a forum for public criticism and compromise.
- It must strive to make the significant interesting and relevant.
- It must keep the news comprehensive and proportional.
- Its practitioners must be allowed to exercise their personal conscience.



ETHICS AND THE DIGITAL JOURNALIST

The challenges for journalists in the 21st-century global digital world of 24/7 multi-platform news are considerable. But in some ways newsgathering has never been easier, with digital search engines and easy access to databases, documents and people around the world. But it is also true that journalists working in the online world are now subject to more abuse, and more violent and sexually explicit abuse, as Case Study 3 highlights, than at any other time in journalism's history. As part of the expectation that journalists engage with their audiences, they become vulnerable to verbal and visual attacks. No longer are journalists allowed to remain anonymous, the disembodied voices behind a newspaper masthead. Even print journalists are expected today to have a profile on social media and to be known by sight to their audiences; daily journalists also have the challenge of managing their personal social media profiles beside their public faces. With these changes, there needs to be a shift in the way we think about journalism ethics in the new collaborative online world of journalism.

In their quest to be first with the news, journalists are also competing technology-savvy citizen journalists within a 24/7 global digital environment, and this means a constant challenge of making ethical decisions under the pressure of increasingly short deadlines. And journalists, as ever, are individuals, bringing their own lived experiences and prejudices to the job. While they may outwardly strive to be balanced, objective or at the very least fair, the contemporary role of journalists as opinion writers means organisations are often encouraging journalists to take sides, to have a view and to express their opinions. The cult of the celebrity journalist—and the realisation that opinion columns offer a far cheaper way to produce content—means that the old notion of the impartial journalist (a myth) is privileged over hard news content, particularly costly investigative reporting.

And journalists today are now producing and filing stories across multiple platforms in real time, as well as periodically updating them, engaging with their audience on Twitter and social media sites, moderating reader's comments, and producing film still images and text—and they are expected to ensure that the fundamentals of their work remain the same. Journalists still need to gather information and create news stories that are factual, accurate, informative, fair and engaging. They need to do this in shorter time frames than in the past and, most importantly, they need to be able to think on the run, make good ethical decisions and produce powerful journalism.

In a world of nonstop news, the World Wide Web, news blogs and podcasting, journalists today are facing unprecedented pressures and demands. News content has changed significantly in the past decade, with stories that were once regarded as soft news, such as celebrity and human-interest stories, now taking the place of hard news stories. While some commentators, such as cultural critic and journalist Jon Katz (1992), see the shift to infotainment news as part of an exciting new era, for others the changes are a threat to journalism itself. Academic and former *New York Times* chief political journalist Richard Reeves argues that it is possible to bypass older values and standards of journalism in a world of 'dazzling new technologies, profit driven owners, celebrated editors, reporters and broadcasters' (Reeves 1998), and that the press must go back to doing what it was hired to do long ago: to stand as an outsider and to 'keep an eye on politics and government for readers and viewers busy in the pursuit of happiness' (Reeves 1998: 16).

Journalist and academic Ian Hargreaves argues that in this new era of journalism, ‘the ethic of truthfulness and accuracy’ must remain at the ‘heart of the morality of journalism’, and that without these qualities, ‘journalism cannot inspire trust and without trust, there is no worthwhile journalism’ (Hargreaves 2003: 11). Ethical journalism remains central to the future of news journalism. Without credibility, journalism has lost its effectiveness and its ability to animate democracy.

MEDIA OWNERSHIP

As we saw in the *News of the World* scandal and as identified by the subsequent Leveson and Finkelstein Inquiries, ethics is not only about individual journalists behaving unethically. Journalists behaviour is directly influenced by the culture of the industry in which they operate. As the Finkelstein report pointed out, Australia has the most concentrated media ownership in the developed world. News Corp Australia has 65 per cent of the total circulation of metropolitan and national daily newspapers, and Fairfax controls another 25 per cent (Bacon 2012). In a study of twenty-six countries, Australia was the only country in which a single company—News Corp—accounts for more than half of daily circulation; in twenty of the countries surveyed, the share of the top company was under 40 per cent. The problem of concentration means that there is a possibility that media owners and journalists will unduly influence public opinion (Finkelstein 2012).

JOURNALISM CODES OF ETHICS

In 1923, the American Society of Newspaper Editors adopted the first journalism code of ethics, followed by the American Society of Professional Journalists three years later. However, it was not until 1944 that the Australian Journalists Association (AJA) introduced its own code of ethics. This code was revised in 1984, and reviewed in 1993 and 1996. The 1996 ethics review committee saw the MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics as a ‘statement by members to the public of the ethical considerations which will guide them in their activities on behalf of keeping the public informed’ (MEAA 1996). The committee’s aim was to influence the actions of practitioners, making them conscious of their responsibilities and of the various interests at play in a particular set of circumstances. The existence of a code allows journalists to be aware of the standards expected of them by their peers and by the public, and to make ethical decisions with prior knowledge of the code of practice.

The MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics

The opening statement of the MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics (MEAA 1996) defines the core principles of the code:

Respect for truth and the public’s right to information are fundamental principles of journalism. Journalists describe society to itself. They convey information, ideas and opinions, a privileged role. They search, disclose, record, question, entertain, suggest and remember. They inform citizens and animate democracy. They give a practical

form to freedom of expression. Many journalists work in private enterprise, but all have these public responsibilities. They scrutinise power, but also exercise it, and should be accountable. Accountability engenders trust. Without trust, journalists do not fulfil their public responsibilities. MEAA members engaged in journalism commit themselves to:

- honesty
- fairness
- independence
- respect for the rights of others.

The code contains twelve clauses, which cover the core ethical issues facing journalists today and which are discussed briefly in this chapter. The Guidance clause, which has attracted debate, provides journalists with the choice, when faced with ‘substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people’, to override the code.

GUIDANCE CLAUSE

Basic values often need interpretation and sometimes come into conflict. Ethical journalism requires conscientious decision-making in context. Only substantial advancement of the public interest or risk of substantial harm to people allows any standard to be overridden. [MEAA 1996].

One way of understanding the MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics is to apply Stephen Ward’s (2009) principles:

- 1 *pro-active principles* and standards that direct journalists (or news media) to actively seek out and investigate truths, in an independent manner.
- 2 *restraining principles*, and standards that direct the journalists to use that freedom responsibly, by avoiding unnecessary harm and by being accountable.

Pro-active principles include:

- *Seeking the truth*—journalists should pursue and investigate important truths within the constraints of daily journalism. Standards that fall under this principle include accuracy, fairness, balance and diversity, disclosure of all essential facts, not suppressing relevant available facts, completeness and context, proportionality and objectivity.
- *Being independent*—journalists should seek and report the truth without fear or favour and without bowing to commercial influences. They serve the public as a whole, not factions or special interests. Standards that fall under these principles include the avoidance of conflicts of interest, and the disclosure of any perceived conflicts of interest that could affect accuracy, fairness or independence; independence from other institutions; refusal of special favours; not allowing advertising to undermine accuracy, fairness or independence; and the courage to criticise the powerful. The issue of independence is particularly significant in Australia’s highly media concentrated market because there are fewer news outlets, meaning consumers have more limited access to diverse voices. The problem with newspaper and media outlets being partisan in Australia was highlighted in a 2011 study by the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism at the University of Technology Sydney, which found

that the two biggest News Corp Australia tabloids, the *Herald Sun* and the *Daily Telegraph*, were so biased in their coverage of climate change that it was fair to say they campaigned against the policy rather than covered it (Bacon 2013). However, News Corp has argued that consumers want them to put forward an opinion. According to former News Corp's executive Kim Williams (2012):

Good publications know what they believe in. They know their readers. They should take positions. Otherwise they risk becoming mush. They risk losing those readers. They risk losing their relevance. They eventually close.... To thrive in this new world, media companies must continue to do what they have always done—provide great, curated journalism. Journalism that is fresh, that is relevant, that is accurate and that is yes, opinionated.

Restraining principles include:

- *Minimising harm*—journalists, in seeking truth independently, should avoid causing unnecessary harm to the subjects and sources of their stories, such as children and victims of violence or tragedy. It is not always possible for journalists to avoid doing harm. The duty is to reduce harm in the carrying out of one's legitimate professional duties, such as not violating someone's privacy without reason; never exploiting a person's vulnerability or ignorance of media practice; and not placing unnecessary emphasis on personal characteristics, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, age, sexual orientation, family relationship, religious belief, or physical or intellectual disability.
- *Being accountable*—journalists should be able to explain and justify their actions and their stories, especially where stories are controversial or have negative impact on individuals or groups. Accountability means articulating the standards that guide one's journalism (making people aware of the code of ethics for example), and providing the means through which the public can question and complain. It means aiming to attribute information to its source and, where a source seeks anonymity, not to not agree without first considering the source's motives and alternative attributable sources.

In any complex situation, journalists will have to balance two or more of these four principles. Where serious public truths are at stake, pro-active principles trump restraining principles. For example, the privacy of a politician may be violated to investigate a serious abuse of power (Ward 2009)

The many principles, standards and values that surround the discussion of journalism can be confusing. One way to organise these ideas is to start with the 'traditional ethical model' of journalism: the Fourth Estate model we talked about in Chapter 3, which goes back to the emergence of the modern, professional journalist at the end of the 1800s. Some of the main functions that come under this aim are to:

- inform the public on important events so as to allow self-government
- act as a watchdog on abuses of power, both private and public
- provide an open forum for the expression and critical discussion of issues, viewpoints and values.

EFFECTIVENESS OF CODES OF ETHICS

Academic and former *New York Times* chief political journalist Richard Reeves acknowledges that ‘the deepest fault line in the geography of press standards is self-censorship: reporters and correspondents generally give editors and owners what they want, because what they want is what they print or show’ (Reeves 1998: 68). But perhaps the greatest weakness of the MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics is not that it is regulated by journalists, but that in Australia in the 21st century, individual workplace contracts mean that many journalists are not members of the MEAA and cannot be sanctioned for breaches of the code. Furthermore, many of the key decision makers in media organisations—the editors, producers and owners who wield the power, and who should be accountable for unethical behaviour—are also not MEAA members, and are not subject to the code and its enforcement system. Quite simply, the MEAA/AJA Code alone cannot deliver media accountability in Australia.

The Australian Press Council

The Australian Press Council (APC) was set up in 1976 by the AJA, which was then the major journalists’ union, and a group of newspaper publishers who feared that widespread public dissatisfaction with the press would lead to the government introduction of statutory regulations. While the impetus to establish an industry body was self-interest—to protect the legal freedoms of the press—the APC also saw itself as combating negative public perceptions of the press by raising the standard of print journalism through accepting and handling public complaints. The inaugural chair, former High Court justice Sir Frank Kitto, said the Council’s *raison d’être* was to insist upon:

high ethical principles in journalism to raise the general standard of performance in exercising the freedom which the law allows to the press and by so doing to preserve public regard for that freedom, for the sake of the Press of course, but ultimately and most importantly for the people (Disney 2015b).

But almost from the beginning, both journalists (through their union) and press proprietors were disgruntled with the APC. Fairfax Media believed the APC was unable to meet public expectations and refused to join for the first six years, while News Ltd (now News Corp Australia) was also reluctant to join and withdrew for almost a decade. Remarkably, the AJA, which played a key role in the establishment of the APC, withdrew for almost 20 years (Disney 2015b). The Finkelstein Inquiry, which considered the performance of the APC, refers to the history of how the newspaper proprietors undermined the effectiveness of the APC at crucial moments including when News Ltd took over the Herald and Weekly Times group of newspapers in 1987.

Limited powers

As a non-statutory body, the APC has limited powers to oversee complaints and ethical standards. The Council cannot enforce its decisions except to require that they be published. Unlike the UK’s recently established Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO), set up in the wake of the Leveson Inquiry, the APC cannot require a correction to be published or impose a fine or sanction an individual journalist.

From the public viewpoint, the APC has always had some credibility problems, particularly because for most of its history publishers have been allowed to sit on the Adjudication Panel, leading to a perception of the industry protecting itself. Facing strong criticism from the Finkelstein Inquiry, the publisher members of the APC, under the chairmanship of Professor Julian Disney, agreed to withdraw their representatives from the Adjudication Panel; and the Panel was reduced from the full 23 members to a smaller panel of five to seven members.

Another ongoing issue with the ability of the APC to be effective is adequate funding. The APC is entirely funded by media proprietors and throughout its history has been subject to ebbs and flows. With almost half of its funding coming from News Ltd and a quarter from Fairfax Media, the APC is at the mercy of the two most powerful newspaper companies in Australia. Disney sees the instability in the funding model and the lack of sufficient funds as key reasons behind the ineffectiveness of the APC: 'Resources are hopelessly inadequate and they were even before our number of complaints doubled, so it is really just to carry out the responsibilities that we are meant to have and that people expect us to do' (Hall 2012).

The Finkelstein Inquiry concluded that the APC 'suffers from serious structural constraints. It does not have necessary powers or funds to carry out its function' (Bacon 2012). Ray Finkelstein concluded that the APC was unworkable and that a new regulatory body, the News Media Council, should be established (Finkelstein 2012). However, proprietors were unhappy with the proposed model: News Ltd said it now strongly supported strengthening the Australian Press Council through an increase in funding.

Disney also said that in a rapidly evolving media landscape, the 'convergence' (or blending) of print, online and broadcast platforms within individual media organisations 'should spell the end of the Press Council as it currently exists' (Grimm 2014). Disney believes the Council needs to be replaced by a single media regulator responsible for the entire industry: 'I think there's a need to move towards convergence as it's called, in other words for there to be broadly the one system for all types of media because increasingly there is convergence and interaction and overlap' (Grimm 2014). However, such has been the resistance to the proposed model that, as of 2015, the APC continues to fulfil the watchdog role (this issue is further discussed later in this chapter).

Other watchdogs: ACMA

The broadcast media have different regulators and, arguably, the journalists, editors, producers and owners in this field are subject to more stringent codes of conduct than their print media colleagues. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), which replaced the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA) in 2005, enforces the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (BSA), which covers commercial and community broadcasting in Australia. Since ACMA has the power to grant and withdraw broadcasting licences in many sectors of Australian broadcasting (excluding the ABC and SBS), it wields considerable (at least theoretical) power in this sphere. The ABC and SBS have their own codes, under their own legislation, that are not enforceable by ACMA, although both national broadcasters are required to submit codes of practice to ACMA, which ACMA uses to assess any complaints made against them (Department of Communications n.d.). Under s. 123 of the BSA, industry groups have developed codes of practice in consultation with ACMA. These codes are not restricted to ethical issues, but cover a whole range of matters. ACMA monitors the

codes, and deals with unresolved complaints made under them. The current Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, for example, was registered with ACMA, and came into effect on 1 July 2004. It covers a wide range of commercial television activities, including program classification, advertising time, accuracy, fairness and privacy in news and current affairs, disclosure of commercial arrangements and the handling of complaints. Similarly, commercial radio and community radio and television are subject to their own codes, each registered with ACMA.

Under this 'co-regulation' model, the commercial broadcasters set their own standards and have 60 days to answer any complaint. The Finkelstein Inquiry found significant weaknesses with ACMA. For example, if a complainant (the person or organisation making the complaint) is not satisfied with the response they receive from a commercial broadcaster they can move on to AMCA, where it will take four months to consider the complaint. The complainant is not a party to these proceedings and is usually not even interviewed. The Inquiry found that this system does not sufficiently recognise the rights of complainants and needs an overhaul. This finding alone shows that the Inquiry does not favour all forms of statutory regulation, which can be just as dysfunctional as self-regulation (Bacon 2012).

In 2012, the then Minister for Communications, Steven Conroy, set up the Convergence Review, chaired by IBM boss Glen Boreham to look at issues of regulating the media in the digital multi-platform age. The Convergence Review recommended setting up diversity and public interest tests for media ownership and recommended the abolition of laws that carved up the media landscape into categories of television, radio stations and print. However, with a change of government the recommendations have also not progressed.

FINKELSTEIN INQUIRY

In 2012, Ray Finkelstein QC brought down his findings after five months inquiring into the Australian media. His report was widely criticised by media proprietors for challenging the freedom of the press. The key recommendation from the inquiry was for the establishment of a single council across all media called the News Media Council. The move to a cross-media form of regulation recognised the impracticality of dealing with print and broadcast separately, when in today's online environment traditional print media publish text, video and sound online. Finkelstein proposed that the News Media Council would have the power to force media outlets to issue apologies and correct mistakes, and would provide the best way to preserve the media's freedom and integrity. Media proprietors thought otherwise.

Bob Cronin, a member of the Australian Press Council and the group editor-in-chief of West Australian Newspapers, said at the time: 'I'm not claiming ... that the media is perfect but my difficulty with what Mr Finkelstein proposes is that you then have a level of government involvement in what the media can and can't publish and, you know, from that point of view the freedom of the press is lost' (Hall 2012). Cronin went on to describe the Finkelstein recommendations as 'the most outrageous assault on our democracy in the history of the media' (Hall 2012). Former News Corp executive Kim Williams was scathing of the report, claiming the Inquiry was a 'grave threat to press freedom' (Williams 2012).

Finkelstein's recommendations of independence, balance, speedy corrections and apologies were already part of the various voluntary codes that cover journalism and media, so what was so alarming about Finkelstein's recommendations? Media proprietors and other commentators found the recommendation that these measures be enforceable and paid for by the government unacceptable.

Others saw the News Media Council as a positive way forward to improve the current inequities between print and broadcast media in Australia. Former journalist and journalism academic Denis Muller saw the recommendations as offering an opportunity to do away with the current inequities of the licensing system for broadcast news and current affairs: 'It is wrong in principle that broadcast news and current affairs should be subject to a licensing system. There hasn't been press licensing since about 1689, but there has been licensing of news and current affairs in the broadcast media since the inception of radio' (Hall 2012).

Independent Media Council

In the midst of the Finkelstein inquiry under Prof Disney, the APC enhanced standards and processes for complaints and made a commitment to comply with new additional powers to direct that corrections be placed in offending publications. But Fairfax Media was unhappy about the changes and Kerry Stokes's Seven West Media remained obstructive. When the changes took effect, Seven West Media, which owns the powerful West Australian Newspapers group, left the Council and set up its own complaints body, the Independent Media Council (IMC), to deal with complaints in Western Australia.

Meanwhile, back at the APC

The new chair of the APC, Professor David Weisbrot, took over from Julian Disney at the beginning of 2015, but the old tensions between the major funders of the APC (Fairfax and News Corp) and the APC itself have continued. There is ongoing conflict between *The Australian* newspaper, owned by News Corp, and the APC. In February 2015, *The Australian* editor-in-chief Chris Mitchell said he would do everything he could 'to remove my paper from the activism of the Press Council' after the APC passed a motion condemning the newspaper for breaching its confidentiality requirements (Robin 2015a).

The fact that the ACP is still primarily funded by Australia's two major print publishers leaves it vulnerable, with some commentators thinking Fairfax and News Corp may find it cheaper and more controllable to set up their own equivalents to the Seven West model, meaning the APC will fall into irrelevance (Holmes 2013).

While the APC is now stronger in terms of representation—with new media organisations including Ninemsm, Crikey, New Matilda and the New Daily joining—there are ongoing issues:

- Its membership is voluntary
- It is primarily funded by Australia's two major print publishers
- Members can leave and set up their own complaints body
- The Council is finding it difficult to influence online news organisations and individual J-bloggers (journalists both amateur and professional blogging)

- The council has no control over online news sites that have their offices outside of Australia, such as the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*, which are two of the top ten online news sites visited by Australians.

Where to now?

The News Media Council recommended by Finkelstein looks unlikely to be established and the Finkelstein report appears to be gathering dust in the bowels of Parliament House. Stephen Conroy's Public Interest Media Advocate Bill 2013 was introduced into Parliament in March 2013 but did not progress. The Bill was to create the independent statutory office of the Public Interest Media Advocate (PIMA). And as mentioned earlier, the Convergence Review also has not progressed.

Post the Finkelstein Inquiry, the Australian public is still waiting to see an effective comprehensive complaints and standards organisation. In the UK, in the wake of the Leveson Inquiry, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) was established, but it also has voluntary membership and some organisations including the *Guardian* and the *Financial Times* have announced plans to set up their own internal processes (Robin 2015b).

ETHICS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

Ethics is a major issue in public relations practice, as it is in media practice, and a source of much angst internally and much condemnation externally. People entering the profession will find several levels for thinking about public relations ethics, including two that we canvass in this section. There is the level of the everyday practitioner faced with how best to portray a piece of information he or she is required to promote. Then there is the level of great societal trends, in which the individual tends to get swallowed up and ceases to have much immediate individual influence.

In the bigger picture we can see how campaigns of spin have been used to change world events (such as using the methods and tools of PR to provide justification for going to war). However, the individual practitioner can observe how public relations has come to dominate the presentation of information in the public sphere—and wonder about whether this is a potentially dangerous development—while nurturing ethical behaviour in their own public relations work. There are well-documented cases where PR has been spectacularly unethical, but the individual practitioner, even knowing that, can choose to behave ethically at all times and provide a genuinely useful service. Some ways of looking at the development of individual ethical practice can be found in the ideas of both Aristotle and Kant (see the boxes, 'Following Aristotle' and 'PR and deontology', below).

As discussed above, all Australian journalists, at least notionally, are governed in their behaviour by a code of ethics that stresses honesty, fairness, independence and respect for the rights of others. An essential part of the ethos of the profession is that its adherents may operate unfettered by the kinds of constraints that work against free speech, such as commercial or political expediency.

So how does this accord with the way in which PR practitioners operate? On the surface it may appear that the two professions are hopelessly at odds, even though they must work in tandem. While that may well be the case in some areas, for the most part they actually do work rather

well together, perhaps because their aims are not as far apart as they may seem. Both journalism and PR deal in the organisation and exchange of information. The problem for individual public relations people may be, to a certain extent anyway, one of perception. The media has a long-standing ethos of disinterested independence, an ethos that is not enjoyed by the public relations industry. This tends to make public relations people even more vulnerable to ethical criticism than journalists. This perception is probably not helped by the fact that PR had its beginnings as a profession in psychological theories about how to understand and manipulate human behaviour, and its practitioners used the word 'propaganda' freely until the Second World War. However, the issues are not so simple.

There may even be *excessive* emphasis on ethics in PR; indeed, other professions may not bear up so well if they were subject to the same kind of ethical scrutiny. Often, this scrutiny has come from media practitioners, who may have something of a vested interest in disparaging one of their major sources of information—slamming PR can be a cheap and easy way to polish up one's own ethical image—just as long as they remain journalists and don't move over to 'the dark side'.

Enjoying a quiet drink with certain members of the PR profession, we came up with the absolute minimum definition of a PR job: the ability to lie about your employer with conviction.

Stuart Vine, BBC online discussion.

PR people are employed across many sectors, including all levels of government, business and industry organisations, community organisations, educational institutions such as universities and schools, scientific and medical research organisations, charities, and international organisations such as UNESCO and WHO, as well by individuals such as film stars, television personalities, sporting figures and other celebrities. PR embraces a huge range of activities, so it is hard to generalise about all of them. One thing you can say is that the PR people in all these types of organisations will be seeking to place their employers or clients in the best possible light to the various publics they seek to inform and influence. They will also be assisting them to overcome any existing or potential image problems they may encounter by releasing positive information or material designed to create a certain impression.

This automatically seems to put practitioners at risk of ethical compromise, as the quote above from Stuart Vine insinuates. If we can agree that the underlying fact of public relations is to help win public acceptance for a product, service, plan or idea, does that not imply being selective with the truth at the very least? But this matter can be looked at slightly differently. If PR people understand the way journalists operate, as they certainly should, then their task when they carry out media liaison may simply involve selecting those pieces of information that assist the journalist to get to the point of a story, leaving out time-consuming irrelevancies. This principle would also be the case when PR professionals are interacting with publics other than the media, such as governments and shareholders, or directly to members of the public.

FOLLOWING ARISTOTLE

Scholar David L. Martinson (2000) acknowledges the ethical dilemmas faced daily by PR practitioners. The profession does throw up a range of ethical issues. His advice to the practitioner who aspires to a long career of ethical behaviour is to follow the way of Aristotle. Specifically, Martinson (2000) raises common PR issues such as:

[How] can the practitioner ethically represent both management and the public interest? How should the practitioner respond when a journalist accuses him/her of not releasing complete information at the same time management believes that very request goes well beyond that which the public/journalist has a right to know? How should the practitioner respond to employees during those times when management/employee interests appear to be in conflict?’

Aristotle can assist the practitioner in making decisions in specific cases from two perspectives: (1) Through his insistence on the importance of habit in making ethical choices, and (2) By his emphasis on ‘the intellectual virtue of prudence or practical wisdom ... [which dictates searching for] the midpoint between excess and defect.

In other words, if the practitioner consciously nurtures the virtue of ethical behaviour, decision-making becomes more ethical because that is their normal way of behaving. That way, virtue becomes imbued in one’s everyday life. The second edict simply means that ‘the practitioner should respond to the legitimate concerns of the client and the news media, but not in such an extreme fashion that his or her professional and ethical obligations to one are sacrificed in an effort to serve the wishes of the other’ (Martinson 2000). Moderation and balance in the response aid ethical behaviour, according to these ancient (but still relevant) precepts.

The best and most useful forms of PR do exactly this—the practitioners, mindful of media (or other audience) needs, evaluate the available information and present it in a form acceptable to the recipients. They make information less complicated, and therefore more readily understood, or they frame positions and issues for clarity. The success of this approach is apparent in the way media journalists accept this information and use it readily, often coming back for more. As long as the information fits with what the journalist is hoping to achieve, then the journalist will have no qualms about making use of it, and ethics will not enter into it. On countless occasions, the information prepared by a PR person is simply absorbed into the reporter’s copy, often without attribution. The lot of the PR person is not to receive bylines. This practice of just slotting material into what should be researched journalism is part of the ethical problem shared by media and PR people, but is by no means entirely the fault of PR.

PR AND DEONTOLOGY

As PR has evolved, so has its ethical framework, even though some may say it has not evolved enough. Nevertheless, PR ethics are of great concern to many theorists and practitioners. One method for dealing with practical ethical issues has been proposed by US scholar Shannon A. Bowen. This framework is based upon the deontology of Immanuel Kant (see a discussion of deontology earlier in this chapter).

In her article, 'A Practical Model for Ethical Decision Making in Issues Management and Public Relations' (2005), Bowen says: 'As the ethical conscience of the organization, public relations practitioners should be well versed in both moral philosophy and ethics.' We would endorse that sentiment. Ethical behaviour is not only the right thing in itself, but it also leads to a more sustainable professional practice. Drawing upon a strong foundation of philosophical thinking is helpful when constructing a lasting ethical system. The Kantian 'categorical imperative' works well in this context. According to Bowen (2000), 'by virtue of having a rational will and moral autonomy, Kant categorically obligated all beings to fulfill their duty to the moral law'.

Bowen's interpretation of Kantian philosophy in the PR context requires PR decision makers to thoroughly examine the ethical content of their professional behaviour and to rule out self-interest, greed and selfish motives by posing the questions: 'Am I acting from the basis of reason alone?' and 'Can I rule out political influence, monetary influence, and pure self-interest?' Bowen (2000) says:

If the answer is 'yes,' then the issues manager can proceed to the next step in the model for analysis of the ethical dilemma and on towards decision making. If the answer is 'no,' then subjectivity has been revealed and the decision maker must step aside and defer the decision to another issues manager or a group decision-making process.

The model then subjects decision-making to the most rigorous test of deontological philosophy: the categorical imperative. This involves considering three questions that are central to the notion of ethical behaviour:

- Can I obligate everyone else who is ever in a similar situation to do the same thing I am about to do?
- Would I accept this decision if I were on the receiving end?
- Have I faced a similar ethical issue before?

Bowen says: 'These practical restatements of Kant's categorical imperative allow issues managers to effectively apply an abstract concept to a practical problem.'

The theoretical framework proposed by Bowen was tested in two large US firms and the article explains how they played out in practice.

In dealing with the problems posed by PR practice, professional groups in Australia and elsewhere have developed codes of ethics. The most important one in Australia has been devised by the Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA), which is reproduced towards the end of this chapter. Point three of the code specifically forbids members to 'knowingly disseminate false or misleading information', and to 'take care to avoid doing so inadvertently'.

So the notion of promulgating falsehood—the single biggest ethical charge levelled against PR practitioners—is expressly forbidden by the profession's most important organisation. This requirement can be found in the equivalent organisations in other countries as well. But, as with the print media, these ways of behaving are essentially voluntary—there is no enforceable sanction within the profession against people who choose not to behave this way. The only remedies outside public relations are laws such as the *Trade Practices Act 1975* (Cth), which do limit the ability of any organisation to convey misleading information, but which tend to deal with extreme and persistent cases of deceptive or misleading conduct. The Act does not cover the small distortions or omissions or the little white lies that can be employed to give a nice spin to something.

Jim Macnamara, an Australian public relations theorist, takes the view that PR is often the victim of sheer prejudice, and that the more realistic view about the profession is that it is an essential part of a pluralistic society. As he puts it (Macnamara 2001):

The growth of PR is clear evidence of the market telling us something. PR is not going away and needs to be recognised. Most journalists think that the entire public relations industry exists for no other function than trying to manipulate or stonewall the media, leading to negative and often paranoid attitudes towards PR. Accordingly, the growth of public relations is viewed with fear—and some loathing—by many journalists.

Macnamara maintains that this is largely driven by ignorance and a kind of knee-jerk derogatory response that is unjustified. In fact, he claims that most public relations activities are not related to the media, quoting a breakdown of PR activities, based on recent US research, as follows: 60 per cent of PR budgets were for functions other than media liaison and publicity, based on 10 per cent for internal communication, 10 per cent for special events, 8 per cent for investor relations, 7 per cent for community relations, 6 per cent for fundraising, and 9 per cent for public affairs and government relations, with other funds spent on advice, research and issues advertising (Macnamara 2001).

Macnamara sees the rise of these functions as commendable, because it shows that corporations and other large organisations are actually taking communication seriously; they are moving away from the bad old days of opaque decision making and distant management not interacting with employees or the outside world. In effect, he says, PR has improved corporate and organisational culture substantially, including its ethics. He also notes that the media themselves have played a dominant role in encouraging the rise of public relations (Macnamara 2001):

Economics have forced the shrinkage of reporting staff in most media. Many small town and suburban newspapers and many trade journals are produced by one or two people. From days when 'roundsmen' proactively covered all key areas of civic and business activity ... today many companies and organisations have no likelihood of the media contacting them. They have to take their news to the media, or directly target audiences, or they will not get their message across.

The image of PR people as ethically compromised persists, however. A 2000 survey carried in the USA caused an uproar in the industry. On 8 May 2000, the *New York Times* carried a story headlined 'In Public Relations, 25 per cent Admit to Lying'. This story emerged from a survey carried out by a trade newspaper, *PR Week*, of 1700 PR executives. The survey showed that 25 per cent admitted to lying on the job, 39 per cent had exaggerated the truth, 44 per cent had felt 'ethically challenged at work' and 62 per cent had felt 'compromised by lack of information or lying clients'.

Adam Leyland, then editor of *PR Week*, commented that he would like to survey business people at large to find out how many of them lied, and how many media people had lied to get or enhance a story. The speculation in the industry at this point was: why should PR people constantly have their truthfulness disputed or discussed when business people, journalists and politicians routinely tell lies as well, and it is often impossible to know when anyone is really telling the truth?

The PR ethics backlash

Perceived unethical behaviour inevitably causes a public backlash, and that is certainly the case with the PR industry. Not surprisingly, the backlash originated in the same place that spawned public relations: the USA. A voice of dissent against the influence of PR is a group called PR Watch, which can be found at www.prwatch.org. On this site one can find, depending upon their inclination, bracing honesty or unbelievable polemic, all to do with the consequences of PR in modern society.

One of the gurus of this anti-PR movement is John Stauber, who, with his colleague Sheldon Rampton, published a famous anti-PR tome, *Toxic Sludge is Good for You: Lies, Damned Lies and the Public Relations Industry* (1995). If the authors are to be believed, the public face of many companies is frequently far removed from a shadowy and immoral reality.

An article called 'War on Truth: The Secret Battle for the American Mind' by Derrick Jensen (1999), which is based upon an interview with John Stauber, quotes Australian academic Alex Carey, who said: 'The twentieth century has been characterised by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy.' Carey's book, *Taking the Risk out of Democracy: Propaganda in the US and Australia* (1995), was published posthumously—Carey had died in 1988 and his essays were later collected. Like the influential philosopher Noam Chomsky (who wrote the foreword to this book), Carey takes the view that there is something specific and unique about Western democratic society that leads to abuses of power that are different from those found in non-democratic societies, but are just as damaging. He says that in a technologically advanced democracy, 'the maintenance of the existing power and privileges are vulnerable to popular opinion' in a way that is not true in authoritarian societies. Therefore, elite propaganda must assume a 'more covert and sophisticated role' (Carey 1995).

This means, says Carey and others, not just putting forward positive assertions but also subtly undermining all potential sources of dissent; indeed, vilifying those who do not hold to corporate values, many of which are equated with democratic values. This amounts to the active discouragement of a diversity of views and the concomitant rise and celebration of mediocrity and conformity. Large communities that are in a state of mediocrity and conformity are unlikely to look too deeply at how they are being manipulated. Carey saw this as nothing less than social engineering designed to make people feel free, while they are in fact enslaved by the need to buy products produced by the corporations.

UNDERSTAND THE CRITICS

Being an effective communicator implies sophisticated self-knowledge. Understanding the critics of one's profession is a useful exercise in developing such knowledge. Aspiring PR practitioners should visit the PR Watch website and critically evaluate the material presented there.

One of the most prominent figures in the way PR developed its practices towards this goal of mass manipulation was Edward Bernays, the so-called father of PR. Bernays (1947) said: 'It is impossible to overestimate the importance of engineering consent. The engineering of consent is the very



essence of the democratic process. It affects almost every aspect of our daily lives.' Bernays believed that, with a little help from the theories of his uncle Sigmund Freud, average people could have their views engineered to the benefit of elite groups, whether they were politicians or corporations. Maybe the best summing up of the thinking of these pioneering PR people comes from a quote from a contemporary of Bernays, Harold Lasswell (1927), who wrote: 'More can be won by illusion than by coercion.' In the context of these views and behaviours, a lot of the criticism of PR has arisen.

In his brief introduction to *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*, Mark Dowie uses as a focus Edward Bernays's infamous 'Torches of Freedom' rally in New York—allegedly in support of the right of women to smoke cigarettes, but really a piece of consent engineering paid for by a cigarette company—before developing an overview of the critique of PR. It is a critique largely based upon both ethical considerations and the usurping of the watchdog role of the news media. Dowie (1995: 4) writes:

Academicians who study media now estimate that about 40 per cent of all 'news' flows virtually unedited from the public relations offices, prompting a prominent PR exec to boast that 'the best PR ends up looking like news' ... It is critical that consumers of media in democratic societies understand the origin of information and the process by which it is mediated, particularly when they are being deceived. Thus it is essential that they understand public relations.

The many critiques of PR ethics have considerable strength, and all prospective practitioners need to be aware of the nature of the criticism—and do whatever they can in their own practice to ensure that they are not adding to the causes of dissent. Some of these issues are not for PR people alone to solve, however. The decline of traditional Fourth Estate media is a broader societal issue that has no simple cause or solution, although it is looking increasingly likely that the watchdog role has moved online. And online is where the loudest voices warning about PR are often to be found.

PUBLIC RELATIONS INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIAN (PRIA) CODE OF ETHICS

Members shall deal fairly and honestly with their employers, clients and prospective clients, with their fellow workers, including superiors and subordinates, with public officials, the communications media, the general public and with fellow members of PRIA.

- 1 Members shall avoid conduct or practices likely to bring discredit upon themselves, the Institute, their employers or clients.
- 2 Members shall not knowingly disseminate false or misleading information, and shall take care to avoid doing so inadvertently.
- 3 Members shall safeguard the confidences of both present and former employers and clients, including confidential information about employers' or clients' business affairs, technical methods or processes, except upon the order of a court of competent jurisdiction.
- 4 No member shall represent conflicting interests nor, without the consent of the parties concerned, represent competing interests.
- 5 Members shall refrain from proposing or agreeing that their consultancy fees or other remuneration be contingent entirely on the achievement of specified results.

- 6 Members shall inform their employers or clients if circumstances arise in which their judgment or the disinterested character of their services may be questioned by reason of personal relationships or business or financial interests.
- 7 Members practising as consultants shall seek payment only for services specifically commissioned.
- 8 Members shall be prepared to identify the source of funding of any public communication they initiate or for which they act as a conduit.
- 9 Members shall, in advertising and marketing their skills and services and in soliciting professional assignments, avoid false, misleading or exaggerated claims and shall refrain from comment or action that may injure the professional reputation, practice or services of a fellow member.
- 10 Members shall inform the Board of the Institute and/or the relevant State/Territory Council(s) of the Institute of evidence purporting to show that a member has been guilty of, or could be charged with, conduct constituting a breach of this Code.
- 11 No member shall intentionally injure the professional reputation or practice of another member.
- 12 Members shall help to improve the general body of knowledge of the profession by exchanging information and experience with fellow members.
- 13 Members shall act in accord with the aims of the Institute, its regulations and policies.
- 14 Members shall not misrepresent their status through misuse of title, grading, or the designation FPRIA, MPRIA or APRIA.
- 15 Adopted by the Board of the Institute on 5 November 2001, this Code of Ethics supersedes all previous versions.

CONCLUSION

No human society in history has ever fully worked out how it should organise and behave for the benefit of all. The base side of human nature constantly militates against the noble side. The very power of information automatically confers much potential for dishonourable behaviour that must be balanced by structures that attempt to ameliorate this power and minimise its misuse. Because media and public relations professionals deal with information, and sometimes powerful and influential information, they must be more mindful than most of the consequences of their actions. Most practitioners do acknowledge the need for an ethical framework and strive to work within it. Spectacular examples of those who do not tend to dominate discussions on this issue, but what tends to get overlooked is the daily quiet adherence of millions of practitioners who know they are part of an endeavour that can affect how the world is constructed, so they do their best to keep it real.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- The three major schools of thought in modern ethics are deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics.
- Moral philosophy can assist journalists as they weigh up the public's right to know against the privacy of affected parties when making a decision as to whether to publish or broadcast a story.
- Journalists face considerable challenges in the 21st-century global digital world of 24/7 multi-platform news, particularly the challenge of making ethical decisions under the pressure of increasingly short deadlines.
- Australia has the most concentrated media ownership in the developed world.
- Codes of ethics allow journalists to be aware of the standards expected of them by their peers and by the public, and to make ethical decisions with prior knowledge of the code.
- Australia's print media is overseen by the Australian Press Council (APC), and the broadcast media by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).
- A 2012 review by Ray Finkelstein QC recommended the scrapping of the APC and the establishment of a single body to oversee all Australian media—the News Media Council—but this has been resisted by unions and proprietors.
- Ethics is a major issue in public relations practice and a source of much angst from within and much condemnation from outside.
- Some ethical issues are in the control of the individual practitioner (such as refusing to lie for a client), while some are bigger than the individual (such as the fact that most news these days is sourced from PR and not from the activities of journalists).
- While PR practitioners in Australia are expected to adhere to the PRIA Code of Ethics, this code is voluntary and not enforceable.
- The profession of PR does not have the same ethos of disinterested independence that journalism has long embraced.
- PR may in fact be subjected to excessive scrutiny that goes beyond what is warranted.
- PR practitioners can help journalists by selecting those pieces of information that assist the journalist to get to the point of a story, leaving out extraneous and time-consuming irrelevancies.
- The Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA) has developed a code of ethics for PR practitioners that, among other things, forbids lying.
- The backlash against PR has been led by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton, through their book *Toxic Sludge is Good for You* and the website PR Watch.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 Is the deontological approach to journalism ethics still effective in the 21st-century global digital age?
- 2 How can citizen journalists be made accountable for their practice?

- 3 What are the ethical issues with highly concentrated media ownership?
- 4 Is the Australian Press Council still relevant in the digital age? Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the APC.
- 5 What are the advantages of a News Media Council, as suggested in the Finkelstein Report?
- 6 Why is public relations especially scrutinised for ethics?
- 7 How can the individual PR practitioner ensure their own ethical behaviour?
- 8 Is there any foundation to the charge that public relations relies upon lying?
- 9 Imagine that you are working as a public relations officer for Cityville City Council, dealing with media liaison and other public relations issues regarding the granting of a tender to build a new shopping centre in Cityville. Consider the following potential ethical issues and prepare 200-word responses to each:
 - a A prominent journalist has requested advance notice of the successful tenderer, with a promise to provide favourable coverage of the Council's choice.
 - b A senior executive at one of the companies involved in the tendering process has been trying to find out the outcome of the company's application by ringing a junior member of the public relations staff.
 - c An elected Council official has been trying to get you to play down important information about an environmental impact statement connected with the development. The statement raises concerns about the survival of a rare species of lizard that could be wiped out by the shopping centre.

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WEBSITES

Ethics in Journalism: www.spj.org/ethics.asp

FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting): www.fair.org

MEAA/JA Code of Ethics: www.alliance.org.au

PR Watch: www.prwatch.org

Public Relations Institute of Australia: www.pria.com.au

18

MEDIA PRACTICE, INDUSTRY CHANGE AND THE LAW

TIM DWYER

INTRODUCTION

The terms ‘media’ and ‘law’ can be combined in various different contexts. Arguably the single most significant development in this binary is the way the role of journalism in the post Snowden–NSA world has come under renewed scrutiny in democracies. In the documentary film *Citizenfour*, which examines Edward Snowden’s dramatic disclosures of top secret US government information, media audiences get a closer look at the way journalists work to bring information to the public in legally volatile situations.

So it was, when in mid 2013 the vast quantities of phone records and internet traffic metadata routinely collected in the PRISM surveillance program were revealed by the former National Security Agency contractor, Edward Snowden. He leaked thousands of documents to the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* newspapers. As discussed in Case Study 4, these events instantly tagged Snowden as ‘the world’s most famous whistleblower’. They surpassed historic leaking moments like the Pentagon Papers scandal in 1971, the similarly mass-scale activities of WikiLeaks (including the ‘Afghan War Diary’ and the ‘Iraq War logs’, both released in 2010), the US State Department diplomatic cables in 2010–11, and other events of that ilk.

Media practitioners learning the ropes will need to develop an understanding of a range of key concepts, frameworks and general legal literacies that are relevant to their roles as content creators. On one level, this is simply a matter of self-protection, but on another it is about acquiring the confidence to create well-informed, quality content for a media citizenry.

To begin to get a sense of the legal implications of our media practice, we can consider these different scenarios. Do you ever write for a university newspaper, a newsletter or manage their social media accounts? Have you helped produce content for community television, radio or websites? These activities all require legal knowledge and have potentially serious legal ramifications. Consider the following questions related to your own online practices:

- Do you discuss other people in multi-recipient emails?
- Do you publish content on websites or social networking platforms—including on your own Facebook profile—or take content from other people’s profiles?
- Do you have your own Twitter account and tweet about events or people?
- Have you uploaded images to Snapchat or Instagram, or video to a video-sharing site such as YouTube?
- Do you share images or video between mobile devices?
- Do you use recorded images or sound without people’s express consent?

If you have created, used or distributed content in any of these ways, you would have been bound by the same legal principles as journalists and other media workers who write or produce content for metropolitan dailies, radio or television, or 24/7 online. You are now a publisher, and everyone in the publishing industry has the same rights and obligations as other citizens. All are subject to the same laws. But the distinctive nature of media and journalistic work brings it into contact with specific areas of law every day. The two most important of these are the laws of defamation and contempt of court, while issues of confidentiality, privacy and copyright can also affect media practitioners in their everyday work.

It is not necessary to have a lawyer’s knowledge, but media practitioners do need to recognise risky words and phrases, know when to seek legal advice in relation to controversial content, estimate whether a publication is likely to land them in court, and make informed judgments about whether to proceed with a publication. These can be complex topics, for which this chapter aims to provide a broad overview. In this chapter we look at:

- the structure of the Australian legal system
- defamation law
- contempt of court
- confidentiality
- privacy
- copyright
- law in changing mediaspheres.

THE AUSTRALIAN LEGAL SYSTEM

Courts

Knowledge of the court hierarchy and the **jurisdiction** of particular courts will assist in assessing the general significance of a case.

The highest court in the Australian legal system is the High Court of Australia. Its role is to interpret the Constitution and to hear appeals from other courts: federal, state or territory. As the highest court, its decisions are binding on all other Australian courts. Freedom of expression cases, which are heard in the High Court, are of great interest to media practitioners.

Next in the court hierarchy is the Federal Court, which has original and appellate jurisdiction. The states and territories also have their own courts, which interpret and apply the law. In ascending tiers, these are:

- *Magistrates' Courts*, which deal with the most common criminal offences, such as traffic infringements and minor assaults, and smaller civil claims such as debt recovery
- *Intermediate courts*, such as District or County Courts, which hear the majority of serious criminal offences (often with a jury), and more serious civil claims up to certain monetary limits
- *Supreme Courts*, which are the highest courts in Australian states and territories, and deal with the most serious criminal and civil claims; these courts may sit with either a single judge, or a bench of three judges as an appeal or full court to hear appeals from decisions made by judges in courts or tribunals lower in the hierarchy. Supreme Courts usually have specific categories or lists of matters they can hear. Defamation cases (on the Defamation List), for example, are heard at this level.

Sources of law

There are two principal sources of law: statute law and common law. The former refers to laws enacted by state or federal parliaments, while the latter refers to judge-made law as decided in specific cases over time and through the interpretation of statutes; together, these are known as the 'doctrine of precedent'. The mechanism of precedent, then, is a feature of common law systems.

Common law systems derive from the English legal system, and are followed mostly in those countries with a previous colonial connection to Britain, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. The application of the common law system diverges in the USA from other former colonies as a result of its system being shaped by a powerfully independent Congress and Supreme Court. However, in all common law system countries the outcome of cases can be uncertain, depending on the interpretation of the legislation and the relevance of judgments in previous cases. Parliaments may change legislation at any time, and judges must work within the current Acts and rules of statutory interpretation.

The common law system may be contrasted with **civil law systems**.

#Jurisdiction: Either the power granted to a legal body, such as a court or tribunal, to administer justice within a defined area of responsibility, or a geographically delimited area within which certain laws apply (for example, a state, territory or nation).

#Common law system: The basic structure of law in Australia, based on a combination of the decisions that judges make according to statute and case law (precedents set by earlier judgments in higher courts).

#Civil law system: A legal system based primarily on the interpretation of statutory codes, such as those existing in much of Europe (as opposed to systems based on the doctrine of precedent, such as the UK common law system).

CIVIL AND CRIMINAL CASES

Criminal action: A court case brought by the state against somebody who has committed a crime.

Civil action: A court case relating to disputes between two parties.

Plaintiff: A person bringing a civil action to court.

Remedy: Compensation awarded to a plaintiff in a civil action.

Damages: An amount of money awarded by a court as a remedy in a civil action.

Freedom of expression: For media workers, the fundamental legal right to discover important information and convey it to the public.

Media practitioners might be parties to criminal or civil actions, depending on the nature of the published material. **Criminal actions** are brought by the state. A driver who breaks road speed limits knows there is a risk of encountering the criminal justice system. Likewise, a publisher who interferes with the business of the courts might face criminal charges. By contrast, **civil actions** occur when legal proceedings are commenced by private individuals or entities to obtain compensation or redress from those who they claim have caused them harm. If a publisher is responsible for material that impugns the reputation of a person, then they may well be sued for the hurt and pain caused.

One major difference is that in criminal cases, the accused is presumed innocent until a court finds otherwise. In civil cases, there is usually no notion of guilt or innocence in the criminal sense. The **plaintiff** attempts to obtain some kind of **remedy** for the perceived wrongdoing, and a court might award **damages**. This distinction is essential knowledge for media practitioners, as we shall see later in this chapter.

A further difference may be illustrated by way of an example. In 2005, a high-profile community leader, Mr X, faced rape charges. The Crown lost the case on the evidence before the court. Mr X was therefore found by the court to be innocent of the rape charges. The following year, a woman claiming to be the victim in that same rape case, sued Mr X in a civil action for damages—and won. Guilt in a criminal case must be proven *beyond reasonable doubt*, but in a civil action the evidence is sifted through and a case is won or lost on the *balance of probabilities*.

All parties to a legal action have rights and obligations. The fundamental right of great interest to media professionals—writers, playwrights, novelists, musicians, performers, producers, publishers and other media workers—is that of **freedom of expression**. Without this freedom, the law can impinge on the efforts of media to report important information and ideas to the public. First in the newsroom, and then in the courts, we see the tensions between the right to freedom of expression and other rights and freedoms. Such rights include the following:

- the right to a good reputation (defamation laws)
- the right to a fair trial (contempt laws)
- the right to safeguard secrets (confidential information laws)
- the right to privacy (laws protecting personal information and communications)
- the right to protect intellectual and creative property (intellectual property laws, including copyright).

In the newsroom, a team of editorial staff—including the journalist, the editor, possibly a legal adviser, and sometimes the executive manager or proprietor—may all have advice regarding the constraints of the law.

Predicting the exact extent of freedoms for media practitioners is not always clear cut, and this is why the media take a special interest in cases that may have implications for future media practice. When a case is before a court, one party will be arguing for the freedom to publish, the other for restrictions on publication, for redress or for compensation, because the publication may have harmed the plaintiff in some way. The role of the court is to tease out all the available evidence, interpreting the circumstances according to the relevant legislation and previous case law.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF FREE SPEECH

In the USA, freedom of the press is called the 'first freedom': free speech and freedom of the press were written into the US Constitution from its inception. In Australia there is no absolute right to free speech. However, Australia is a signatory to the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protect limited rights. The High Court of Australia has ruled on several occasions since 1971 that there is an implied constitutional freedom of expression in political and government matters (see Beattie & Beal 2007: Chapter 5). Australian law, then, has a precedent for freedom of expression, even though it has no constitutional **bill of rights**. In Australia, only the Australian Capital Territory (*Human Rights Act* 2004) and the state of Victoria (*Human Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006) have enacted their own charters of human rights.

To understand the evolution of freedom of speech, it is helpful to trace events back more than 500 years. Even before the development of the printing press in the 15th century, powerful people feared the spoken word. Death, imprisonment and mutilation were punishments for the spreading of gossip. How much more then would the written word create fear among the nobility, when they realised the damage a free press could do to their reputations? In the 18th century, John Milton made his speech in parliament in defence of free speech and a free press: 'A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Publishing', later published as the *Areopagitica* (see Butler & Rodrick 2007: 4). The law of treason may have declined along with the absolute powers of monarchy, but the lineage of laws of sedition and seditious libel flows right through to present-day Australia. Amendments to Commonwealth sedition laws were enacted through Schedule 7 of the *Anti-Terrorism Act* (No 2) 2005 (Cth). This development should be illustration enough that the idea of freedom of speech is a matter that ultimately depends on specific, historically contingent expressions of power within a particular jurisdiction.

But free speech has been philosophically justified in relation to arguments linking it to individual autonomy and liberties, famously invoked by John Stuart Mill's essay 'On Liberty' (1859), in addition to arguments underpinned by the fundamental debates about the value of truth and democracy. It should be clear, then, that debates about the media and the role of media practitioners in the public sphere are closely connected with these wider, historically rich, debates in liberal democracies.

As Beattie and Beal (2007: 89) note:

From their earliest inception these rights had a public character, protecting public assembly and distribution of information, and a private character, protecting individual communications from state scrutiny and keeping the state out of private spaces. The spatial nature of these rights influences the ways in which broadcasting and communications are regulated today.

As democracies have evolved, so too has a recognition of human rights, among them the right to hold and express a view, particularly a view about those people in government who represent the citizens. Arguing for the democratic merits of a written constitution that enshrines freedom of expression and of the media, John Keane makes the point: 'A great variety of legal means can help to promote freedom of expression and access to information among transacting citizens'

#**Bill of rights**: Legislation, through parliament or a clause in a Constitution, that guarantees citizens a legal right to certain freedoms.

(Keane 1991: 128). Publication through the media is the key vehicle by which citizens exercise this right to express their views in the public sphere.

TOLERANCE AND VILIFICATION

Democratic governments, to a greater or lesser extent, tolerate a range of views, including those many might disagree with. Famously, the French philosopher Voltaire described freedom of speech in these terms: 'I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.' The argument is that in the tolerance of all views, even false ones, the truth will emerge; in bits and pieces perhaps, dispersed, and variously revealed, but eventually it will shine through, and this is the incontrovertible quality of freedom of expression.

Taking a long view of the development of free speech, it can be argued that there has been a general shift in focus away from individual political figures and towards the regulation of 'dangerous speech' (Beattie & Beal 2007: 89). Such speech includes vilification or hate speech. Anti-vilification laws are in conflict with the concept of free speech and are justified on the basis of an overriding public interest. These laws use an anti-discrimination model and are regulated at state and federal level through anti-discrimination agencies such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, which relies on the *Racial Hatred Act 1995* (Cth) to operate a complaints-based scheme. If unsuccessful, conciliation is supported by other remedies, including the application of monetary penalties (Beattie & Beal 2007: 99).

It can be argued however, that to suppress one view, which we might believe to be false and damaging, is to risk suppressing worthy views closer to the truth. Furthermore, any suppression of views raises the question: Who shall have the right to exercise this control? Governments and other powerful institutions, such as courts, that suppress freedom of speech are frequently in conflict with the media. Journalists, and often courts as well, hold very strongly to the principle of freedom of expression, though the relationship is perennially unsettled. Consider these events that were widely reported by the media:

- A Danish newspaper, the *Jyllands-Posten*, published cartoons of the prophet Mohammed carrying a suicide bomb in his turban. Many lives were lost in the violent civil protests following their publication.
- The British historian David Irving was jailed in Austria for denying aspects of the 20th-century holocaust in Europe.
- The Australian historian Keith Windschuttle disputed historical accounts of mass killings of Indigenous Australians in colonial times.
- Australian journalist Andrew Bolt's vilified Indigenous people on his *Herald-Sun* media blogs.

These ideas are unpalatable to many, because they are false, offensive, unsubstantiated or highly contentious; however, advocates for free speech say it is better to discuss such views publicly than to suppress them, for public discussion takes all citizens closer to the truth by fostering the emergence of strong reasoning and vital debate, which energise democracy.

Bolt's articles published by the *Herald-Sun* (2009) were titled 'It's so hip to be black', 'White is the New black' and 'White fellas in the black'. Subsequently, a civil action was brought by Aboriginal

activist Pat Eatock. In *Eatock v Bolt* Federal Court Justice Mordecai Bromberg found the articles contravened section 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth). That section prohibits speech which is 'reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate'. Justice Bromberg found that Bolt's articles were reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate and to have an intimidatory effect on fairer-skinned Aboriginal people. In short, Justice Bromberg found that Bolt's speech was racist.

The debate about section 18C triggered by the Federal Court's decision in *Eatock v Bolt* was a highly charged political saga, which ultimately ended up in the Abbott government backing away from threats to water down the laws. It flared up briefly again in the aftermath of the *Charlie Hebdo* tragedy, where the offices of the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris were bombed by a Muslim activist group. These debates are perennial, and it's important to bear in mind that not only anti-hate speech and race vilification laws, but also media codes of practice for various industry sectors, require media workers to observe their rules. There are also complaint procedures under these sector codes for people who have been mistreated by media workers and organisations, including on the basis of race.

It is important, therefore, that media practitioners become familiar with the jurisdictions in which they work. Even within particular countries, differences might apply between the states, which have their own legislatures. Democracies themselves vary significantly in the legal guarantees for publishers. Yet even though legal systems vary from one jurisdiction to another, the principles discussed warrant ongoing discussion.

Armed with the foregoing points, we can now consider specific laws relevant to journalists in their daily work.

DEFAMATION

The meaning between the lines

Imagine this. You are a journalist intern or newby with a story about a famous elite athlete who has been seen behaving badly at an after-competition party. Your source is near where you live so you go and interview them and a couple of other people in the same area, who were also at the party. They all tell the same story: the celebrity athlete had consumed a great deal of alcohol, and then driven her car into another athlete's car on leaving the party. She has been under a probationary warning from her sport's governing body and was facing charges over a violent domestic incident with a previous boyfriend. According to witnesses, when police arrived at the party to investigate, she became abusive. Onlookers were horrified by the Jekyll-and-Hyde character change in the telegenic sports star. You take some quotes, and the revellers tell you other stories about what the celebrity sportswoman gets up to when she is not training for the next personal best. The quotes state that she is crazy, abusive and irresponsible in party mode. You try unsuccessfully to contact her closer friends or family to get their side of the story. It is close to deadline, and this is looking like a powerful article with international interest for the front page. Should you proceed with the information you have? The subeditor is uncomfortable about the story. What solid evidence do you have that the athlete has a split personality, is an unsuitable role model and needs to attend anger-management therapy? A colleague suggests that you take a visit to the athlete's Facebook profile.

There, in jiving, scantily clad detail is your elite athlete in full party mode. There are various perhaps raunchy party images updated on her profile, with a variety of partygoers, so you feel confident of the truth of the events as they have been reported to you. You download all the images from Facebook to your laptop. The subeditor discusses your article with the chief editor, who, under the pressure of time, goes ahead with the story without sending it first to the lawyers to check its safety. The next day, when the paper is out, lawyers for the young sports celebrity call the editor and threaten to sue.

Here, a person's reputation is at stake. Both the images and the words are open to interpretation. The damage is done, not only by the literal words but also by the meanings arising from them. **Defamation** is about perceptions. If the sports star sues, the publisher will need to prove the truth of your story in court. The reported events are relatively minor criminal offences that concern her dubious lifestyle and party behaviour. To prove them, people will have to appear in court as witnesses under oath. The images may convey real events, but they prove little about the overall suitability of the person to be a national sports icon. Not only is her team membership on the line, but all those celebrity product endorsements could be at risk, too. Regarding the Facebook images, media practitioners should also be aware that legal relationships and the general content liability of platform providers, members and third parties are usually matters determined by websites' specific terms and conditions and ethical codes of practice.

Anyone can be defamed by what we call 'imputations' (that is, the meanings between the lines); for example:

- suggestions of incompetence, which might offend a professional practitioner
- suggestions of a politician's activities constituting corrupt behaviour
- suggestions of duplicity, which might offend someone who values the trust of the community, such as a youth worker or a real estate agent
- negative references to physical traits such as obesity, which might offend a sports person
- suggestions of financial mismanagement, which might offend an accountant
- stories of slovenly hygiene habits in the kitchen, which might offend a restaurateur
- stories of shocking party revelry, which might offend the kind of person who values their reputation as a role model for younger elite athletes.

Here are other examples of potentially risky scenarios:

- In a suburban newspaper, a photograph of a youth acclaimed for his community service appears next to an article about a homeless drug addict, prompting discussion with the lawyers.
- A well-known media commentator tweets a random, seemingly jokey comment about the sexuality of a sports star that may damage that person's reputation.
- In a coastal town, a letter to the online editor, from the president of a residents' association, implies that a developer is anti-conservationist. The developer threatens legal action for defamation.

Although these publications seem to be innocent enough, each could lead to a successful claim through the courts for damage to reputation.

The media have the potential to defame people every day. It is not only indirect imputations that you need to be aware of: direct statements, even if partially true, can trigger a defamation suit

Defamation: The
reduction of the reputation
of another person in
the minds of people by
representing that person to
be of a bad character, or by causing
them to be shunned and
avoided.

because the named person is prepared to contest the claim. Unintentionally defaming an individual is expressly not a defence for media workers. Care and attention to detail is always necessary when a person's reputation is at stake. Nonetheless, it is only when someone has the will, the money and the knowledge to sue that the publisher is held to account. Often there is a chilling effect on media work: the actual or perceived threat of possible legal action leads to self-censorship and tends to limit, or completely prevent, the publication of important public interest material. As media law academic Andrew Kenyon has argued: 'Media speech is chilled directly when lawyers recommend editing the content of publications, and is chilled structurally when journalists internalise the law's restrictive principles' (Kenyon 2006).

An action for defamation is usually a civil action, defined in an Act of parliament; however, it has a long and complex common law history (Rolph, Vitens & Bannister 2010: 204). From January 2006, uniform defamation laws took effect around Australia. Each state and territory introduced a defamation Act, in very similar terms, enabling a nationally consistent approach to defamatory publications. The key changes from previous laws relate to introducing standardised defences around Australia. Truth (or justification) is now a complete defence in New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania (truth has always been a complete defence in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia), apologies (or offers of amends) and innocent dissemination have been made statutory defences and the category of qualified privilege for fair reports has been expanded. Potential monetary damages are capped at \$366,000 (although this is indexed to the cost of living, and courts may override in certain situations and compensate for specific economic loss), and corporations can no longer sue for defamation, with the exception of non-profit organisations with fewer than ten employees (Beattie & Beal 2007).

Good intentions

In media workplaces, where the threat of defamation is constant, journalists often check only the articles they think might be defamatory, sometimes overlooking the very ones that turn out to be offensive. Just as ignorance is no excuse in criminal law, so the intentions of the writer are usually irrelevant in a civil defamation action, and it will be insufficient to argue as a defence that you did not intend to defame someone.

The rules of defamation also apply irrespective of the means of distribution: you may be publishing in the traditional media to a multinational, national or local audience, microblogging on Twitter, making a comment on Facebook, emailing a small number of recipients or even just sending a fax. In addition, anyone involved in the publication may be liable: publishers, editors, journalists and their sources. Newspaper printers, distributors, newsagents and retailers and internet service providers can be sued, but they have available to them a defence known as 'innocent dissemination'.

A question of identity

Another pitfall for publishers can occur with mistaken identity. The plaintiff need not be the person the journalist intended to identify in the story, but for an action to proceed, it is sufficient that the readers could presume the plaintiff was the person referred to in the article. Mistaken identity can occur with substitute names, group references, typing errors or omission of a name.

An article about an unnamed shonky pool builder, in a particular suburb where there were three pool builders, could defame all three in that suburb, because readers could assume any one of them was the subject of the article. Conversely, an article containing a general statement about the untrustworthiness of television journalists would be safe, because no particular person would be identifiable in such a large field. Substitute names and absence of names are risky if the field is small enough for identification. Video footage or images that accompany reports can also imply unintended identity, as can textual inference: an apparently de-identified story may contain material that certain audiences will recognise as referencing a particular individual.

The action

In commencing a defamation case the plaintiff must first show that:

- The material was **published** (communicated to at least one other person).
- It contained defamatory content, so there was a loss of reputation.
- Readers could identify the plaintiff as the one referred to in the article.

So to have any chance of succeeding in an action the plaintiff must meet these three conditions.

To show loss of reputation, the plaintiff lists imputations. These are the messages that might result from the actual words—the meaning(s) readers might infer from the published material. Media practitioners become adept at predicting imputations by adopting the walk-in-my-shoes approach. ‘How would I feel if someone wrote this about me?’ they might ask. ‘How might another interpret my words?’ ‘Could I defend in court the truth of these words and their intended or unintended meanings?’ The priority of the media should be on publishing important public interest material and, on legal advice, finding the right defences to fit the facts of the story.

The defence

If the plaintiff is successful in meeting the three elements of defamation, the case proceeds. In the next stage, the burden of proof falls on the publisher, whose task it is to defend the words that have caused offence. It is, then, possible to defame someone legally, if the publisher has a valid defence. In other words, the defendant needs to produce evidence to prove their case.

The defences are defined in the uniform defamation Acts, and the main ones are truth (or justification), privilege, and opinion or comment. There are also other minor defences: triviality, consent, innocent dissemination and offer of amends. Which applies will depend on the circumstances.

Let us look more closely at each of the main defences, because practitioners must know and understand them in order to make informed judgments about whether to publish.

Truth

Truth is the first defence in a defamation action. In Australia, it is nearly impossible to defend words and imputations that are untrue. In the USA, though, where the First Amendment gives greater legal protection to freedom of expression, it is possible.

Publication:
Communication in a
defamation action; it must
reach at least one other
person—hence, a fax,
postcard, an email, a
comment on Facebook or a
tweet may be a publication.

Here is a story of two men in the USA, each with the same family name. A reporter writes a news piece about the criminal behaviour of one. The other is the mayor of the town and a well-known citizen. The editor, not knowing of the criminal but knowing of the mayor, presumes the reporter has made a mistake with the first name, and changes it so that the article names the mayor as having been engaged in criminal behaviour. The mayor sues for defamation. The court agrees his reputation has fallen as a result of the publication. The newspaper cannot prove the truth of the story, because it is plainly false, so there appears to be no defence. The court awards damages to the mayor. But the newspaper appeals the decision on the basis of freedom of expression, which is enshrined in the US Constitution. The court of appeal overturns the earlier decision, finding that, despite the imputations being false (that the mayor was a crook), the First Amendment right to freedom of expression should prevail, providing there was no malice in the defamation.

While Australian journalists have no such protection for untrue publications, the scenario above shows how the defence of truth can be affected by the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression. This guarantee does not negate the need for truth and accuracy, either in the USA or in other Western democracies; rather, it illustrates legal historical differences. In Australia, as in all free speech countries, truth is crucial. No media outlet ought to be publishing unsubstantiated material, whether or not there is a constitutional freedom of expression.

The defence of truth, sometimes called 'justification', is not always as straightforward as it might seem. Imagine that two people meet in a dark city lane. One is a police sergeant, the other a shady underworld identity. The crook hands a brown paper bag to the sergeant. A crime journalist sees the exchange and writes in an article that the policeman accepted a parcel from the other person in a city laneway. The words are true, but the many meanings that spring from them might be untrue. The literal words imply a bribe.

If the publisher can show in court that the imputations are true, then those imputations set or confirm the level of the reputation of the plaintiff; hence, defamation would be impossible. A plaintiff usually lists several imputations, and if the defendant fails to prove just one of them, the defence of truth will fail. In one of the most famous contemporary libel cases—and the longest-running in Britain—the fast-food chain McDonald's sued campaigners Helen Steel and David Morris, a gardener and a postman, over the distribution of a leaflet: 'What's Wrong with McDonald's?' The court found the pair had defamed McDonald's. Having proved the truth of some of the imputations, but unable to prove the others, the defendants were ordered to pay damages of £60,000.

So in order to mount a successful defence of truth, defendants need to prove that all of alleged defamatory imputations in the matter complained of were substantially true. This can be a very difficult task: defendants may be able to establish the truth of an imputation, but to prove the facts upon which the imputation is based can be much more difficult.

Privilege

Defamation law recognises that on certain privileged occasions the public interest in people speaking out will outweigh an individual's right to protect their reputation.

There is an **absolute privilege** to publish otherwise defamatory material in reports of open sessions in parliaments and the courts. Accordingly, the publication of defamatory material from

#Absolute privilege:

Complete immunity from the laws of defamation based on the principle of open justice, which allows the courts and the parliaments to function in a fearlessly independent manner.

such proceedings will be completely immune from the laws of defamation, even if it is in the most scurrilous terms.

A second form of privilege arises in circumstances of **qualified privilege**. This allows the defence to be available provided certain specific conditions are met. The following types of statements would be protected:

- 1 Fair and accurate reports of absolute privileged statements. In these situations journalists need to select and summarise complex information from public proceedings in order to create stories in newspaper style, but they must do so with great care to retain the essential meaning. While the words they take must be verbatim and the selection fair, the actual meanings of the words need not be true or provable. For example, an untrue and unprovable statement made in a parliament or a court by a participant in the proceedings (such as a politician, a witness, an accused person, a lawyer or any other party), and later published by the media, will not place the journalist in jeopardy, as long as the journalist's report is accurate.
- 2 Defamatory communications based on a moral, social or legal duty, where the recipient has a reciprocal duty to receive them. The media are not generally considered as satisfying this requirement.
- 3 Reports of public meetings, where the gatherings relate to matters of public interest.
- 4 Official notices published in accordance with an official request. For example, when the police publish an identikit construct of a suspected criminal, the media may report this without being sued for defamation provided it is a bare facts report of the police notice.
- 5 Where the media provide a space for a person to respond to a public attack; however, no further counter-attack is permissible.
- 6 Discussion of political and government matters, referred to as the 'political qualified privilege', and treated as a defence in its own right. This defence has a special significance in Australian jurisprudence, as it has its origins in a series of free speech cases in the early 1990s, including the Lange case (in which a former prime minister of New Zealand sued the ABC for defamation over imputations in a *Four Corners* program). In that case, the High Court held that the Constitution created an 'implied guarantee' of a freedom to communicate on political and government matters. This defence is sometimes called the 'Lange defence'.

Lange case

The High Court held that the Constitution created an implied guarantee of a freedom to communicate on political and government matters. See *Lange v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* (1997) 189 CLR 520; online at www.austlii.edu.au.

Opinion and comment

The publication of opinion and comment are protected from a defamation action provided certain conditions exist. Essentially, this defence enables the free expression of opinions and comments, and can apply to commentary, analysis, reviews, satire and cartoons. The defence protects an

Qualified privilege:
Material that otherwise
might be regarded as
defamatory, but which
is protected from
prosecution.



honestly held opinion, however extreme or unreasonable it seems. The **honest opinion** defence (similar to the common law defence of fair comment) applies to material presented as opinion, not fact. For example, a statement such as 'The steak was tough and overcooked' is presented as fact. The fair comment defence would therefore be unlikely to hold. But if the journalist had written, 'In my opinion, on that occasion it seemed to me that the steak was tough and overcooked', the fair comment defence may apply, if the statement were the genuinely held opinion of the reviewer journalist, properly researched and without malice. Beattie and Beal (2007: 48) note: 'To rely on the defence the imputations that arise from the published comment (or opinion) must be a matter of public interest, must be honestly held and the facts upon which it is based must be either set out or well-known.'

The honest opinion defence is particularly useful for restaurant reviewers, music and theatre critics, and editorial writers, but it can apply to anyone publicly expressing a view. By definition, opinion and comment need not be provable, just fairly based.

#Honest opinion:

A defence in defamation; the right to publish opinion and comment as long as it is reasonably and honestly researched, and without malice.

Defamation on the internet

In the events leading to the landmark Dow Jones case (*Dow Jones & Company Inc v Gutnick* (2002) 210 CLR 575), defamatory material published in the USA was downloaded in Victoria, where the reputation and identity of the plaintiff, businessman Joseph Gutnick, was well known. In this landmark case the defendant, Dow Jones, operated an online news subscription service 'Barons'. The content was uploaded to servers in New Jersey in the USA. Certain material was claimed to be defamatory by the plaintiff, Joseph Gutnick, a Melbourne investment and share-trading businessman, who downloaded the material in Victoria. Basically, the imputations were that Gutnick had connections to a convicted money launderer and fraudster.

The plaintiff commenced proceedings in the Supreme Court of Victoria. The defendant, meanwhile, sought to have the action struck out on the grounds that Australian law should, like that applied in the USA, recognise that in the case of the internet, publication occurred when the subscription magazine content was uploaded in New Jersey. They also argued, unsuccessfully, that the case should be heard in the USA under US law, where defamation laws tend to be more favourable to defendants (publishers) than in Victoria. The plaintiff's legal team successfully argued that Victoria was the most appropriate place to bring the action, since Gutnick lived in Victoria, and that was where he was most likely to suffer the greatest harm to his reputation.

The High Court established that the action could proceed in Victoria, despite the fact that the material was written, produced and published on a US website. In a unanimous judgment in Mr Gutnick's favour, the High Court held that the general rule was that defamation occurs at the place where the material is made available in a comprehensive form. In the case of the internet, this occurs when material is downloaded and read via a browser, and it is the place where the content is downloaded that any damage to reputation may occur. The action was therefore validly commenced in Victoria, and the High Court found that Mr Gutnick had indeed been defamed, awarded him significant damages, and ordered Dow Jones to pay his legal costs.



Dow Jones case

The High Court held that the general rule was that defamation occurs at the place where the material is made available in a comprehensive form. See *Dow Jones & Company Inc v Gutnick* (2002) 210 CLR 575; online at www.austlii.edu.au.

The wider significance of the case is that it illustrates how the internet problematises jurisdiction. In other words, since defamation laws have evolved in specific geographic jurisdictions, the internet—which crosses all boundaries—now complicates the situation. It cannot be assumed that statements can be made safely online just because they relate to individuals in another country, or because someone has already said it on a website.

The first consideration is the identity of the publisher and disseminator of the material. The internet service provider (ISP) cannot be expected to check all content in the same way that traditional media can check content prior to broadcast or print publication. Hence the ISP, and in some cases also a website, might have the defence of innocent dissemination (just as a newsagent may have such a defence in relation to a traditional newspaper story).

The second consideration is the place of publication and location of the audience. The location of the ISP, the location of the sender (or uploader) of the material and the location of the audience all might be anywhere in the world.

The Dow Jones case means that any person in the world who places content on the web that could be viewed in Australia does so not only subject to the local laws of the jurisdiction where they happen to be, but also subject to the potentially different laws of Australia. And, in reverse, material uploaded in Australia may fall foul of laws in other places where content is downloaded. This will be particularly significant where the foreign laws are more advantageous to a plaintiff identified in the publication than under Australian law. These questions now have to be considered in relation to the place where the plaintiff's reputation is most at stake.

Legislation in the USA and the UK has attempted to define the separation between internet provider and publisher, thus creating a demarcation to protect the ISP from liability. However, the widespread uptake of the internet now means that there could be significant (financial) global implications for this relatively new medium. Although the case specifically concerns defamation laws, Dow Jones has wider implications for internet law and governance in general because it has established the importance of a distinction between origination of content (uploading) and the point of consumption (downloading). In effect, the case means that a person or media organisation making material available online could potentially be sued in just about any jurisdiction where a media platform can be accessed and proceedings can be commenced. However, in practice, there are many other complex jurisdictional issues that may bear on this process (sometimes called 'conflict of laws' principles), including how the specific laws and their enforcement operate internationally.

Many believe that the uniform defamation laws introduced in 2006 now needs to be thoroughly reviewed and updated to be fit for the 21st-century media publishing world. For example, under the 2005 Act in Australia there's no limitation period for online publication and plaintiffs are able to

initiate multiple actions for similar articles. The new British *Defamation Act 2013* has introduced a single publication rule with a one-year limitation period and jury trials are no longer available, the latter always being a contentious debate.

CONTEMPT OF COURT

Four principles

The second key area of legal concern for the purposes of this chapter is **contempt of court**. Contempt laws aim to preserve the justice system so that it works fairly for all citizens. Four principles underpin Australian contempt laws:

- open justice
- the right to a fair trial
- the presumption of innocence
- public confidence in the legal system.

Beyond these is the idea that justice must not only be done, but also must be seen to be done. Hence, any publication with the potential to damage a fair trial could lead to a contempt charge. With this in mind, media practitioners in general, and journalists in particular, need to tread carefully when presenting content about matters relating to the courts.

Contempt of court is usually a criminal offence, punishable by a fine or jail.

#Contempt of court: Any action with the potential to damage a fair trial.

Sub judice

The two main ways in which media may be in contempt of court are by publishing material that could influence a trial and by disobeying a court order. (We discuss the second of these, disobedience contempt, in the later section, ‘Confidential sources and documents’.)

The right to a fair trial, uninterrupted by the media, is highly valued in Western democracies. Equally, as former High Court Justice Michael McHugh has argued, ‘The publication of fair and accurate reports of court proceedings is vital to the proper working of an open and democratic society and to the maintenance of public confidence in the administration of justice’ (*Fairfax v Police Tribunal of NSW* (1986) 5 NSWLR 465). The cost to society of trial by media can be high: delays and even acquittals can result, denying citizens justice as a consequence. Defence lawyers can also use prejudicial publications to their own advantage, arguing that their client could not receive a fair trial after media coverage.

Publications relating to a trial—when that trial is pending or under way—are called *sub judice* publications. We can divide the *sub judice* period into three parts: the pending period, the trial and the appeal process.

In criminal proceedings, the pending period lies between the time when a summons or warrant for arrest is issued, or when a person is arrested or charged, until the commencement of the trial. Proceedings are not pending just because police inquiries are under way. In civil proceedings,

#Sub judice: the period, while a trial is pending or under way, when heavy restrictions are placed on the release of information about the trial.

'pending' refers to the period from the issuing of a writ, statement of claim or summons until the commencement of the trial.

During the pending period, journalists can report the charges and can identify the accused or respondents/defendants, as long as the charges do not involve children as victims or accused. Information that presumes guilt or innocence, that refers to any past convictions, or that otherwise might be relevant to the case is prohibited.

The second stage of the sub judice period is the trial itself, when journalists can report anything stated in an open court. In cases before a jury, more care needs to be taken in reporting the proceedings than in cases before a judge alone, as jurors are considered to be more susceptible to outside influence than a judge.

Children's courts are closed, not reportable, and identities of all participants are protected. Breaches of the law relating to children's courts are extremely serious.

The third stage of the sub judice period is the appeal process, which extends until the appeal process has been exhausted. Journalists can report anything already stated in open court, but can make no further comment that could affect the appeals.

Contempt of court and the media practitioner

We can now see how the law relating to sub judice publications might impinge on freedom of expression. Imagine you have witnessed a robbery. The police charge someone within hours. You know the person committed the act because you saw the event, but you cannot publish this fact in the sub judice period. It is the courts alone that decide the facts, not the media. Now imagine the accused is your brother or sister. You would expect a fair trial through proper court processes, not trial by media, wouldn't you?

All citizens are entitled to the rule of law and to the **presumption of innocence** until a proper court process finds otherwise. The media have great power to influence the fairness of this process.

Notorious cases often result in breaches of contempt laws. If the media and public are hungry for information about a sensational case, courts can be powerless to prevent abuses of the justice process. In December 2006, police in Britain charged a man with the murder of five prostitutes in what became known as the Suffolk strangler case. Although public discussion must cease after a suspect is charged, the *Sun* newspaper published prejudicial material, including a photograph of the accused mock-strangling his former wife, and quotes from two prostitutes alleging he had cruised for sex dressed in drag. Police and the attorney-general reprimanded the media for threatening the man's right to a fair trial.

Publications in other jurisdictions are harder to contain. A court has power only over its own state, territory or nation, and this explains why details of trials during the sub judice period might be published in another country. The trial of the murdered British backpacker Peter Falconio and his relationship with his girlfriend Joanne Lees, for example, were grist to the mill for the UK's tabloid media, while proceedings were sub judice in the Northern Territory.

The magazine *Who Weekly* experienced the heavy cost of sub judice contempt in 1994 in relation to the so-called backpacker murders in New South Wales. *Who Weekly* published an image

presumption of innocence: The right of accused person to innocence in law until a court convicts that person.

of the accused, Ivan Milat, during the sub judice period before his conviction. In the Milat case, the issue of identity was crucial to the trial, and in any event the publication of a photograph of an accused person is prohibited. The front cover of the magazine carried the words: 'Backpacker serial killings. The accused. The private life of road worker Ivan Milat, the man charged with slaying 7 hitchhikers, as told by his brother Wally.' The magazine was fined \$100,000 and the editor \$10,000. The Court of Appeal found that the publisher had a right to seek profit from providing information as entertainment, but had no right to do so at the expense of the administration of justice.

The media are prohibited from reporting material from a closed court, or from proceedings that are subject to suppression orders. Generally, this is in the interests of the administration of justice; for instance, to protect witnesses, to facilitate police informers coming forward to give evidence, and to safeguard the rights of the accused to a fair trial. In early 2008, the Nine Network was ordered by the Supreme Court in Victoria not to broadcast specific episodes of the television drama series *Underbelly* on the basis that the material (referencing Melbourne's gangland murder subculture) would interfere with criminal proceedings in that state (*R v [A]* [2008] VSC 73). Controversially, the judge's suppression orders also prohibited the series being viewed over the internet, a measure which—together with the fact that bootleg DVD copies were easily available—was very publicly seen as unenforceable and was widely discussed in the media. It has been suggested that the Court of Appeal's judgment in *General Television Corporation Pty Ltd v Director of Public Prosecutions* ([2008] 19 VR 68) has now 'added to the list of categories where a court may derogate from open justice' (Rotstein 2010: 110). The disjuncture between the longstanding rationale behind contempt laws and the ways in which audiences are now able to consume their favourite media products was apparent for all to see.

Defences

A journalist charged with contempt of court has few defences, and truth is not among them.

To understand why, return for a moment to the robbery you have witnessed. Let's say you published the truth, that the accused committed the offence. But the case is sub judice, and your report has the potential to influence the jury, who must be free to decide their verdict on the basis of what goes before the court, not what they read or have the potential to read, see or hear in the media.

The main defence for contempt of court is that of a fair and accurate report under qualified privilege. You may report exactly what was said in the court and the bare facts of the case, and if your report is a true and accurate account of those proceedings, you will have a defence.

Another defence, that of public interest, might also apply but is less reliable. Australian broadcaster Derryn Hinch put the public interest argument when charged with contempt of court after referring to the prior convictions of a former priest, Michael Glennon, who was facing sex offences in 1985. Hinch argued the public had a right to know of the accused's history, but the court found there was risk of serious prejudice to the trial because the statements might stay in the jurors' minds.

ADVICE FOR JOURNALISTS

The *ABC All Media Law Handbook* has the following advice for journalists reporting on court cases:

- It is a contempt to state a person is guilty or innocent before they have been convicted or acquitted.
- If reporting on a civil action, do not say a person is liable or negligent before a judgment is given.
- Do not publish an admission of guilt outside the court process.
- Do not publish the criminal record of the accused.
- Do not publish confessions.
- Do not publish evidence relating to the case.
- Do not publish any independent investigation of the case.
- Do not publish any statement in court when the jury is out of the court.
- Do not publish a photograph of an accused person.
- Do not publish a statement of a witness (or potential witness).
- Do not pressure anyone not to participate in a case.
- Do not publish that a trial is a retrial until the retrial is concluded.

Source: ABC [2006].

CONFIDENTIAL SOURCES AND DOCUMENTS

As mentioned in the previous section, as well as contempt by publication there is another area of contempt that is particularly relevant to media: **disobedience contempt**. We discuss this here in relation to confidential sources and documents for two reasons: first, because it is unrelated to sub

Historically, only a fairly narrow number of circumstances have qualified as confidential information. They have included trade secrets, program ideas, domestic confidences, and tribal, cultural, religious and government secrets. It is the latter category, government secrets, that tends to trigger disobedience contempt. This occurs when journalists refuse to reveal their sources when asked by a court to do so; in other words, the law of contempt is on occasion relied upon by the state to protect legal proceedings from certain kinds of journalistic practices (Beattie & Beal 2007: 59).

Confidential sources

Confidential sources can provide important information that might otherwise not be available to the public. But when sources leak such information, they often do so at risk to themselves; hence, the journalist might promise anonymity to the source in return for the information. The MEAA Code of Ethics (1996) states that journalists must respect all confidences, thus ensuring that they keep the trust of those upon whom they depend for information. But if a trial, in which the identity of a source is vital to the case, is under way the judge might decide to call the journalist as a witness to reveal the name of the source.

Since the 1980s, at least twelve journalists have faced contempt of court charges in Australia for refusing to reveal their sources. Two *Herald Sun* journalists, Michael Harvey and Gerard McManus,

pleaded guilty to contempt of court at a pre-trial hearing in 2006 for refusing to reveal the identity of a source who had provided them with leaked documents that revealed that the government had refused a bid for an increase in war pensions of more than \$500 million. They were convicted and each fined \$7000. The leaking of confidential documents is an offence, and a senior public servant was charged, but the decision was later overturned by the Supreme Court. In the contempt case that followed in February 2007, the County Court Chief Judge Michael Rozenes said the two journalists had put their professional ethics ahead of the justice system, and asked how any court could tolerate such a circumstance (MEAA 2007).

The conflict between journalists' protection of their sources and the requirements of the courts remains largely unresolved. **Shield laws** are legal mechanisms to safeguard journalists against prosecution, and are available in some jurisdictions to protect journalists in relation to disclosure of their sources. There are shield laws in six out of nine Australian jurisdictions: federally, New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia, the ACT and Tasmania. The Evidence Act in each of these jurisdictions has been amended to protect sources, but these protections are not absolute (MEAA 2014). As the MEAA in their report note, courts will weigh up the public interest in disclosure against potential adverse consequences on the source or the ability of news media to access sources of facts. The definition of a 'journalist' varies too: 'state legislation defines "journalist" narrowly as someone "engaged in the profession or occupation of journalism", essentially excluding amateur bloggers from being covered by the protections.' (MEAA 2014: 7).

In the USA, the overwhelming majority of states have shield laws, although their introduction at the federal level has been debated in Congress for a number of years—and the Snowden–NSA events have now complicated the passing of laws to protect conventional journalistic sources (*Los Angeles Times* 2010). In the UK, there is limited protection for journalists under the *Contempt of Court Act* 1981. This means that in the UK no court

can require a person to disclose, nor is a person guilty of contempt of court for refusing to disclose, the source of information contained in a publication for which they are responsible unless it is established to the satisfaction of the court that disclosure is necessary in the interests of justice, or national security, or for the prevention of disorder or crime. (Butler & Rodrick 2007: 329 [7.395])

In New Zealand, the *Evidence Act* 2006 contains a specific privilege protecting journalists' sources. In Australia, after a long period of delayed promises, the *Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Act* 2010 was passed in 2011, and as amended, will apply to bloggers and citizen journalists using 'any medium', as well as to traditional journalists.

The new laws strengthen provisions relating to information provided to journalists and requires Courts to consider whether:

- information was passed contrary to the law in determining whether evidence should be admitted, or whether a source should be revealed
- there will be potential harm to the source and/or the journalist if evidence is given.

The laws are modelled on the New Zealand law that provides a rebuttable presumption in favour of journalists not disclosing information in court proceedings that would identify their source. The Act provides that if a journalist has promised an informant not to disclose his or her identity,

#Shield laws: Legal protection for journalists who refuse to reveal their confidential sources to a court.

neither the journalist nor his or her employer is compellable to answer any question or produce any document that would disclose the identity of the informant.

Many observers stress the important connection between effective shield laws and laws protecting the disclosure of confidential information in the public interest. For example, the Australian Press Council argues: 'the Council has always advocated that the introduction of effective public interest disclosure legislation, that includes provisions for disclosure to the media, also requires the introduction of effective shield laws to allow journalists to protect their sources' (Australian Press Council 2010: 13).

A rarely used mechanism is provided for under s. 202 of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth), when the Australian Communications and Media Authority undertakes investigations that may involve calling journalists to give evidence. In these circumstances it is a reasonable excuse for a journalist to refuse to answer a question or produce a document that has been used for the purposes of making a program, when to do so may disclose the identity of a confidential source.

The MEAA Code of Ethics (1996) warns against promising anonymity and advises journalists to find the information elsewhere. But extremely sensitive information, such as that which reveals fraud or malpractice, is usually not easily available elsewhere, hence the need for members of the media to obtain and maintain the trust of their sources.

The journalist's relationship with confidential sources is a grey area where law and ethics can easily be in conflict. Recognising this ethical complexity, in 2008 the ABC's managing director requested that the director of editorial policies review the organisation's policy and procedures (ABC 2008). The review was triggered by the so-called Brissenden affair, involving an 'off-the-record' interview between Michael Brissenden of the ABC's *7.30 Report*, the then Federal Treasurer Peter Costello and two other journalists. The event became controversial when it was suggested that the journalists had breached a confidence with the treasurer.

These cases show the conflict between freedom of expression, the processes of justice and wider public interests. To yield to a court order to reveal a confidence is at the very least to lose face among professional colleagues and, more significantly, to betray a trust. To withhold the information is to deny justice to one or the other party in a case. The courts tend to respect this conflict and are reluctant to convict, but that has not stopped them from punishing journalists such as Harvey and McManus when the administration of justice and ethical media practice were clearly relying on different decision-making frameworks.

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, the Snowden–NSA events have a great deal of significance for journalism and their sources as 'whistleblowers'. Wrapped up in the language of 'anti-terrorism', governments around the world (including Australia's) now justify blanket freedom-restricting and privacy-intrusive measures as necessary to protect their citizens from harm.

The passage of Australia's 'mandatory data retention laws', in the form of the Abbott government's *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Act 2015* goes much further than the usual case-by-case warrants by law enforcement agencies, and requires internet service providers (ISPs) and telecommunications companies to retain details of Australians' telephone and internet use for a minimum of two years. These laws, quite rightly, have been very controversial and many see them as a strong threat to journalism in the public interest.

These metadata collection laws are also a source of great concern for privacy and civil liberties advocates. No doubt wishing to limit the backlash, the government pushed the data retention Bill off to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security for an inquiry in late 2014. In their report released in February 2015, this bipartisan committee of Labor and Coalition MPs gave the green light to the new laws, subject to thirty-nine recommendations concerning increased oversight, privacy protection, safeguards for journalists, and clarification of the data set to be captured and retained.

But the journalists' union in Australia, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) condemned the Parliamentary Joint Committee's recommendation to support the passage of the *Telecommunications (Interception and Access) Amendment (Data Retention) Bill 2014* without any provision for the protection of journalists and their sources. As Chief Executive Officer Paul Murphy observed: 'These laws are the greatest assault on press freedom in Australia in peace time. Together, the three tranches represent a sustained attempt by government to control information. In the process, these laws attack freedom of expression, the right to privacy, the right to access information and press freedom' (MEAA 2014).

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security recommended that the application of the new laws to journalists be considered by a separate committee, which should report in mid 2015. Initially, the Labor Party and a coalition of media organisations called for a complete carve out in the application of the data retention laws for the media and journalists. Then the Labor Party sided with the government to get the legislation passed, and agreed to an amendment that would only require agencies to obtain a warrant before they could get access to journalists' sources. As part of the negotiated warrant mechanism being set up, the new law requires that a public interest advocate will be appointed to argue against access to journalists' data, while a judge will decide on whether the disclosure of the data is in the public interest. Commentators have noted that obtaining a warrant to access journalists' data is unlikely to be a very difficult task for law enforcement agencies. So it would appear, therefore, to be a reasonable argument to make that the requirement to get a warrant cannot be viewed as an adequate safeguard to protect journalists from revealing the identity of their sources in the interest of press freedom.

Confidential documents

The law protects people's secrets, but, as we have discussed above, it has not in the past protected journalists' secret sources. There are, however, crucial differences between protecting a confidential arrangement a journalist might have with a source, and protecting the disclosure of confidential documents. And in a contemporary blurring of this distinction, we need look no further than the highly publicised activities of the WikiLeaks organisation in releasing a video onto YouTube, 'Collateral Murder', which shows a US Army Apache helicopter slaughtering innocent Iraqi civilians, including children, in Baghdad. WikiLeaks, in the few short years it has operated, has facilitated the disclosure of hundreds of thousands of confidential government and corporate documents into the public domain (Khatchadourian 2010).

It is possible that journalists will face legal action if they publish material that has the status of confidentiality. A document does not need to have 'confidential' written on it in order to be

confidential—many commercial communications, for example, are in confidence. Journalists develop a sense for confidential material; that is, they can often identify it even if it is not marked as such. The material must have a quality of confidence; it must have been imparted in a way that carries an obligation of confidentiality. Accidental disclosure of such material is still a breach. To publish is to risk being sued by the party whose confidence has been broken, or to risk being charged with contempt of court if the publication is in breach of a suppression order.

Leaks are the lifeblood of investigative journalism. The person revealing sensitive information usually believes the public has a right to know. But if the leaked material is confidential (and by its nature, it usually is), then any publication carries risk. In the next section we consider the media and privacy: the public's right to know and related ideas of the public interest are often invoked to justify actions by media when individuals' privacy is breached.

THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

In Australia, there is no specific statutory privacy tort or wrong defined in legislation. However, the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC), at the culmination of an extensive investigation, has recommended that such a tort be implemented (ALRC 2008). In 2014, the ALRC again, in their report *Serious Invasions of Privacy in the Digital Era* recommended a statutory tort of privacy, but it has failed to be legislated by the government.

Privacy in Australia has arisen as a patchwork of laws and regulations, and several broad categories of privacy tend to get collapsed together to offer protection. These categories relate to personal information (or data held by corporations and government), communications (telecommunications interception, the use of listening devices and other types of surveillance devices) and laws relating to invasions of private space (autonomy against intrusion into private lives) (Dwyer 2015).

The ALRC surveyed the Australian public in relation to their privacy concerns: the results may surprise. Almost three-quarters of all respondents (73 per cent) cited telemarketing as a major concern, followed by:

- the handling of personal information by the private sector (19 per cent)
- the handling of personal information by government (9 per cent)
- the protection of privacy on the internet (7 per cent)
- national identity cards and smart cards (7 per cent)
- problems accessing and correcting personal information (7 per cent)
- surveillance in public places (4 per cent)
- workplace surveillance (2 per cent).

It would be interesting to research whether these percentages remain post Snowden; we might expect to see more concern in relation to internet and telecommunications metadata.

Amid concerns about the impacts of more restrictive privacy laws on the Fourth Estate role of the media, the ALRC suggests that the courts should be required to consider whether the public interest in maintaining the claimant's privacy outweighs other matters of public interest, including

the interest in informing the public about matters of public concern and facilitating freedom of expression. The ALRC's recommended statutory cause of action for serious invasion of privacy includes the following types of scenarios:

After the break-up of their relationship, Mr A sends copies of a DVD of himself and his former girlfriend (B) engaged in sexual activity to Ms B's parents, friends, neighbours and employer;

Mr C sets up a tiny hidden camera in the women's toilet at his workplace, capturing images of his colleagues that he downloads to his own computer and transmits to a website hosted overseas, which features similar images; and

Ms D works in a hospital and obtains access to the medical records of a famous sportsman, who is being treated for drug addiction. D makes a copy of the file and sells it to a newspaper, which publishes the information in a front page story. (ALRC 2008)

The main federal legislation, the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth), sets out different principles for how private organisations and government agencies should manage personal information or data. In addition, each state and territory has its own privacy laws or guidelines and some also have separate laws on health privacy. The federal *Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000* contains an exemption for journalists in the course of their work as they gather information for news or documentaries for the purposes of making that material available for the public. Arguably, as privacy rights increase, the right to publish decreases.

The *Privacy Amendment (Enhancing Privacy Protection) Act 2012* (Privacy Amendment Act) made many significant changes to the *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act), introducing changes that commenced on 12 March 2014.

These amendments includes a set of thirteen new privacy principles that regulate the handling of personal information by government agencies and some private sector organisations. These principles are called the Australian Privacy Principles (or APPs). They replace both the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) that applied to Australian government agencies and the National Privacy Principles (NPPs) that applied to some private sector organisations. The APPs cover the collection, use, disclosure and storage of personal information, and they provide a process for individuals to access their personal information and to get it corrected if it's wrong or out of date. Other APPs deal with the use and disclosure of personal information for the purpose of direct marketing (APP 7), cross-border disclosure of personal information (APP 8) and the adoption, use and disclosure of government related identifiers (APP 9) (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner 2015).

Journalists need also to be aware of prohibitions on electronic surveillance. The Victorian *Surveillance Devices Act 1999*, for example, prohibits the taking of photos and videos in private places and proscribes the use of material from hidden cameras or audio recording devices.

Privacy laws affect media practitioners at two critical points in the production process: the gathering of information and the publication of information. The MEAA and industry co-regulatory sector codes (administered by ACMA) have provisions that deal with best practice behaviours in relation to protecting individuals' privacy. In addition, the Australian Press Council's Statement of Principles and Print Media Privacy Standards offer a practical guidance framework for media practitioners in the preparation of publications to observe the 'privacy and sensibilities of individuals'. These guidance materials also expressly acknowledge that the right to privacy 'should

not prevent publication of matters of public record or obvious or significant public interest' (Australian Press Council 2007).

Privacy is an area of law that can, in certain situations, cross over with questions of defamation and confidentiality, blurring neat demarcations between rights, responsible media performance and legal redress. We live in times of shifting relations between the public and private spheres. Media and communications are actively implicated in this process of redefining social and cultural understandings of the behaviours we refer to as 'privacy'. Think of the way we now communicate in public spaces and use social networking platforms to share many private details about our lives. When we travel on public transport, we use mobile communication devices to have, on occasions, fairly intimate conversations with those we care about, or other conversations that could be defined as private. Or, to take another example from the mediated public sphere, think of reality television formats. Contestants (and it usually is a some kind of contest) are a weird mix of celebrity and ordinary, and audiences can engage with a hybridity of personal, private and yet highly public human interactions. Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and other kinds of 'mass self communication' as Castells (2007) describes it, also have these hybrid private and public elements. In fact, the software usually allows people to have a binary private/public switch on their personal profiles, which is capable of recognising social distinctions between family and friends who are in a closer network, and all the others whom they permit to become part of the wider network of generic friends.

The Federal Trade Commission and Congressional Privacy Committee members in the USA have investigated the way third-party applications gather and transmit personally identifiable information about Facebook site users and those users' friends. It is possible that 'do not track' regulations will be introduced to protect privacy and prevent data collection by advertisers and other third parties in social networking sites (Canning 2010).

In all the above examples, we can see that the line between the public and private spheres is somewhat fuzzy. But it should be becoming clearer that 'privacy is essentially normative and, as such, the idea of the private changes over time, with part of that change being driven by technological change affecting communications' (Morrison et al. 2007: 199). The ALRC in its 2008 report notes:

It does appear that young people are more comfortable than their parents, and certainly their grand-parents, in sharing personal information, photos and other material on social networking websites. The question is whether this represents the beginnings of an enduring cultural shift, or simply the eternal recklessness of youth, played out in a new medium and utilising new technology. Put another way, will today's teenagers be horrified in a decade's time when prospective employers—and prospective partners and in-laws—can easily 'google up' intimate and potentially embarrassing images and information?

Through Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, a right to privacy is now enshrined in UK law; in the USA, the right to privacy is a strong legal right with a long history (based on a *Harvard Law Review* article entitled 'The Right to Privacy' in 1890 by Brandeis and Warren), giving litigants an alternative to defamation laws, which are much weaker.

The case of the wedding of actors Michael Douglas and Catherine Zeta-Jones in 2000 illustrates how a loosening of one law can be neutralised by a tightening of another. A media discussion

over privacy, confidentiality and defamation was sparked when the magazines *Hello!* and *OK!* published photographs taken at the wedding. *OK!* paid for exclusive rights to publish the Douglas–Zeta-Jones wedding photos, while *Hello!* published paparazzi shots. Zeta-Jones called the paparazzi snaps ‘sleazy’ and ‘offensive’, and took issue with shots showing her new husband spooning cake into her mouth. Meanwhile, *OK!* sued *Hello!* for breach of confidentiality. Six years later, the Britain and Wales Court of Appeal (Civil Division) ruled in favour of *OK!*, treating the photographs as akin to trade secrets for the purposes of the law of confidences.

The House of Lords had earlier, in *Campbell v Mirror Group Newspapers Ltd* [2004] 2 AC 457, confirmed the legitimacy of the new privacy right in the UK, with a ruling that a newspaper had breached supermodel Naomi Campbell’s right to privacy when it published a correct statement that she had visited Narcotics Anonymous. Under the European Convention of Human Rights, an individual’s Article 8 rights are engaged if one has a ‘reasonable expectation’ of privacy in the information concerned.

Typically, in debates about media and privacy laws, there is a view expressed that the role of paparazzi and ‘stories about the private lives of celebrities amount to big business, and poor practice would leave media organisations exposed to liability for damages’ (ALRC 2008). In this context, many media commentators and practitioners see a general international shift from the right to publish towards the right to privacy.

PRIVACY CASE STUDY: CCTV

How often do you hear a news report say ‘Police are reviewing CCTV footage’ to assist in solving a crime? The increasing use of CCTV cameras in public spaces is one of the more visible changes to privacy in recent years. Broadly speaking, their usefulness in reducing incidents of criminal activities has tended to outweigh civil libertarian arguments in relation to growing surveillance trends in society and a general reduction in personal privacy. On the one hand, it is difficult to argue with statistics showing that criminals suspected of very serious crimes (such as murder and rape) have been apprehended after the police have examined CCTV footage. On the other hand, the police have got it wrong at times, and apprehended the wrong people after relying on CCTV footage.

A television current affairs item, examining the use of CCTV cameras in inner London, illustrated the excessive surveillance now prevalent in cities, when the reporter was captured on camera more than a dozen times as he commuted by bicycle from where he lived to where he worked (ABC Television 2007).

Another concern is the increasing tendency for surveillance systems to be linked together in cities and for them to be run by computerised systems with little human intervention. As security experts are quick to point out, such systems are only as good as the component elements from which they are constituted. Should one system get it wrong, there is a cumulative error in all the systems.

The case of Joey De Mesa is an example of the use of CCTV surveillance going out of control. A 23-year-old fruit shop worker noticed himself on CCTV footage on the news in an item concerning a serial rapist, so he handed himself in to Mount Druitt police, hoping to clear up any uncertainty. He had records to prove that he had been at work on the day in question. Unfortunately for Mr De Mesa, he was left in a cell for several days and refused bail. There were eleven charges against him, including



three counts of aggravated sexual assault, three counts of aggravated robbery, indecent assault, and stalking and intimidation linked to assaults on five women in Sydney's northwest between April and June. All the charges were eventually dropped on the basis of forensic tests when his case went to the Supreme Court (*Sydney Morning Herald* 2008).

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Freedom of information: Laws that grant some rights of access to government documents of public interest.

Freedom of information (FoI) laws are now a characteristic of open government in democratic societies. FoI laws in Australia are mostly based on a US precedent, which has been mirrored in all states and territories except the Northern Territory.

The legislation exists to create an enforceable right to access documents held by governments, their departments and agencies. There are various exempt agencies (for example, the security organisations ASIO and ASIS), as well as specific categories of exempt documents, including:

- essential interests or functions of government, such as national security
- relations between state and territory governments
- Cabinet documents
- Executive Council documents
- documents that would jeopardise the deliberative processes of government (internal working documents) against the public interest
- law enforcement documents
- documents that would prejudice a fair trial, breach a confidence or constitute contempt of court.

Even though FoI remains an important channel for access to government information by the media, most users of FoI are non-journalists seeking personal information.

Access is by way of filling in an application form, paying the required fee and waiting the prescribed thirty days to be notified of the outcome of the request. If access is refused (and the grounds for such refusal will be stated), applicants have a further thirty days within which to lodge a request for an internal review. There is a further appeal process through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

The FoI process is sometimes criticised on the basis of the number of exemptions and the high costs involved, which has tended to thwart its original objectives. A controversial feature of Australia's FoI scheme has been the mechanism of a 'minister's certificate', or 'conclusive certificate', which allows a minister to make a declaration that a disclosure of particular documents would be contrary to the public interest. These ministerial decisions are beyond the ambit of a full merits review, unlike many administrative decisions made by bureaucracies. There have been recent measures to reform FoI laws by state and federal governments in terms of lowering fees and charges, and increasing general accessibility and workability. At their heart, these reforms are being driven by attempts to reignite the original intentions of these laws, which were to make government more open and accountable to its citizens and to allow the use of freedom of information by journalists to ensure that matters of public concern are brought to the public's attention through the media (Australian Press Council 2010).

COPYRIGHT

You have had an idea for a news feature story. You meet a writer friend at a city cafe and discuss it. Your friend goes away and turns your idea into an online article. She then meets a third friend to discuss the article, leaving a copy for comment. The third friend has connections with the *New York Times*, and with the best intentions sends the article (based on your idea) for publication.

In this scenario, there may have been a breach of **copyright**. The article has been published without permission. Who owns the copyright? Not you, but the person who turned your brilliant idea into a material form: your writer friend. She is the one who might sue the third friend and the *New York Times* online.

Who owns an idea?

The *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth) protects all creative and **intellectual property**. It does not protect ideas, only the material form of those ideas.

Copyright is automatic. It needs no registration, and while the universal copyright symbol is a warning against misuse, it is not essential. The owner of a work of writing, art, photography, music, poetry, performance, or a logo, house plan, design or cartoon, is the only person entitled to publish the work for any purpose. Another may use it only with permission.

The copyright owner in a work has the exclusive rights to:

- reproduce the work (for example, convert it to a digital format)
- publish the work (for example, in a newspaper, magazine or book)
- communicate the work to the public (for example, post it on the internet or make it available to download on mobile phones).

Most creative and intellectual works are copyright. Publication of a line of a song or a paragraph of prose needs permission from the owner. Building a website using video, images, sounds, links to other websites, text quotes or news items published elsewhere will all require permission from the copyright owner (Forder & Svantesson 2008). The idea of culture as property is the main metaphor that underpins all intellectual property laws: copyright, moral rights, patents, designs, trademarks and passing off in common law.

The advent of digitalisation and convergence processes has radically reconfigured these laws and their wider cultural implications for creativity and innovation. User-generated and DIY media creation in general have altered the balance and expectations of deriving income from intellectual property. The inability of traditional legal concepts to adapt to these processes has led to alternatives to conventional intellectual property laws; for example, in **creative commons licensing** and **open source licensing** (Beattie & Beal 2007).

In response to obligations under Article 11 of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) Copyright Treaty 1996 to introduce **technological prevention measures** (or TPMs), Australia introduced its own digital copyright laws with the *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000* (Cth). This Act updated copyright laws for digital media and communications by introducing a 'broad-based technology-neutral' right of communication to the public, which subsumes and extends the previous broadcast and cable rights.

#Copyright: The exclusive right, granted by law for a period of time, to control the publishing and copying of a particular publication or artistic work. It does not protect ideas, only the material form of those ideas.

#Intellectual property: A broad term used to refer to intangible property created by the mind.

#Creative commons licensing: A form of licensing that encompasses the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright (all rights reserved) and the public domain (no rights reserved). Creative commons licences help owners keep their copyright while inviting certain uses of the owner's work—a 'some rights reserved' copyright.

#Open source licensing: A copyright licence to modify computer software code, generally entailing a requirement to make available to others any modifications that are made.

#Technological prevention measure: A device, product, technology or component (including a computer program) that in the normal course of its operation controls access to or use of the copyright-protected work, for example, software coding that prevents a CD from being used in a car.

A consolidated version of the *Copyright Act 1968* (Cth)—including the amendments under both the *Copyright Amendment (Digital Agenda) Act 2000* (Cth) and the *Copyright Amendment Act 2006* (Cth)—can be found at www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/ca1968133.

Broadly, the purpose of these laws was to introduce tougher restrictions on consumers' use of digital products such as recorded music and film, including the criminalisation of illegal use. So-called digital rights management and specific TPMs have attempted to limit widespread infringement. There has, for example, been a number of high-profile cases in the USA and Australia in relation to peer-to-peer (P2P) music and film file sharing. Overall, however, the effects of these cases on creation, distribution and consumption trends in media consumption have been very limited. Despite a great deal of commentary to the effect that these changes signal the end of intellectual property, corporations continue to invest a great deal of money, time and energy in fighting these battles.

How can this apparent impasse be resolved? In Lessig's view, the 'copyright warriors' continue to frame the debate 'at the extremes—as a grand either/or; either property or anarchy, either total control or artist won't be paid'. In his view, and it is a persuasive argument, 'the mistake here is the error of the excluded middle'. What is actually needed, he suggests, is 'neither "all rights reserved" nor "no rights reserved" but "some rights reserved"—and thus a way to respect copyrights but enable creators to free content as they see fit' (Lessig 2005: 277).

Copyright: key points to note

Copyright lasts for the lifetime of the creator, and for fifty to seventy years thereafter (also, twenty years for a patent, ten years for a trademark or five years for a design).

Copyright can be transferred to another owner by sale or assignment (for example, to a publisher in return for royalties or a lump sum), by inheritance or by licensing for a fixed period.

Copyright permissions usually incur a fee, in the case of books, for use of more than 100 words. For journalists, it is usually sufficient to request permission by telephone, while book publishers obtain written permission, specifying the nature and extent of the use.

Breach of copyright must involve a substantial part of the work. Consider the opening sentence from Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times', or the famous lines from Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*: 'All happy families resemble one another but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way', or these words from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*: 'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree'. In each case, the lines are only a tiny part of the whole work, but they are crucial part nevertheless, and hence they illustrate what the courts could debate as being a substantial part.

While the *Copyright Act* distinguishes between commercial and educational use, it does not make any judgment about the quality of the work or the talent of the creator: a bad poem has as much significance in copyright as one written by a Nobel Prize-winning literary genius.

The *Copyright Act* allows some limited copying of protected materials in certain situations; for example, artistic works displayed in public spaces may allow copying by photography or filming.

The *Copyright Act* provides a limited number of exceptions to copyright infringement under fair dealing sections covering the following generic situations:

- research or study
- criticism or review
- reporting the news
- legal advice or judicial proceedings
- parody and satire.

Despite the fact that copyright laws operate in national jurisdictions, they have become increasingly globalised through international treaties and international trade agreements. These have the affect of setting minimum standards for rights and providing avenues for enforcement, including trade sanctions in the case of World Trade Organization (WTO) treaties. Several of the Digital Agenda amendments, for example, were subsequently repealed and replaced by laws to implement Australia's free trade agreement with the USA (AUSFTA), including the *Copyright Amendment Act 2006* (Cth).

The Australian Copyright Council website contains full details in relation to copyright laws in Australia; see www.copyright.org.au. For information about intellectual property more broadly, visit IP Australia's website at www.ipaustralia.gov.au.

Moral rights

Another category of rights exists for creators of certain copyright-protected works, called moral rights. Moral rights impose separate rights and obligations that are associated with copyright in a work, and accompany copyright if the work is eligible for copyright. As Beattie and Beal explain: 'Moral rights differ from copyright in that they are personal non-economic rights. They cannot be sold or licensed and even if copyright is sold, moral rights remain with the creator' (2007: 122).

Moral rights require the creator to be attributed whenever their work is reproduced, communicated to the public, exhibited or published. They prevent people from falsely attributing a work, treating a work in a derogatory way, or modifying it in a way that is prejudicial to the reputation of the creator. Consent is required for each particular event that may breach the moral rights of a creator.

LAW IN CHANGING MEDIASPHERES

The ways in which media are produced, distributed and consumed by audiences continue to change relatively rapidly. Communications media are constantly undergoing significant transformations in this era of deregulation, concentrating ownership and the internet. Therefore, it is important to recognise that the fundamental debates involving communication and society both change and stay the same.

The design of regulatory frameworks to oversee the media industries will need to be updated as they evolve. Convergent media and the proliferation of access devices will require ongoing adjustments on behalf of audience and industry constituencies. The role of the key regulator of the media in Australia, the ACMA, was confirmed by the High Court in *Australian Communications and Media Authority v Today FM (Sydney) Pty Ltd* [2015] HCA 7 in 2015. This case stemmed from a succession of courts assessing whether the 2Day FM commercial radio station breached its licence when it broadcast a prank call that led to the suicide of a British nurse in 2012. The High Court confirmed that the ACMA did have the necessary powers to make a finding against the radio station and that it was constitutional for them as a media regulatory body to do so. This decision was a landmark one for media regulation in Australia because it settled the question as to whether the ACMA had 'teeth' to intervene in such matters. The ACMA is empowered under the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (Cth) and the *Australian Communications and Media Authority Act 2005* (Cth) to take a range of enforcement actions including suspension and cancellation of licences.

Many will, however, question the longer-term value of this decision when only very light penalties are applied to very serious breaches of laws, licence conditions and other regulations.

An important implication of the media industry's evolution is that the traditional media of television, radio and newspapers are changing alongside the popular new media forms. Accordingly, many of the laws that have been developed in the context of existing media may also be relevant to new media, such as the internet and social media applications.

Enduring concerns will include the wider set of law, policy and regulation that grapples with a wider set of issues:

- the media and democracy
- media concentration and ownership
- public service media and market liberalism
- universal service and net neutrality
- the representation of race, ethnicity and other diversities
- news and the coverage of elections
- the availability of a full range of programming genres
- protection of the child audience
- the provision of services for less able audiences.

Clearly, traditional concerns do not just disappear because of new media delivery and audience consumption modes. We can safely predict that new modes will change social and cultural uses as a result of innovation by, for example:

- developments in the way people are using media while in transit, based on their specific locations, accessing content that originates almost anywhere in the world
- the ease of falsifying identity, or the altering of content itself, through software that enables such modification
- other forms of as yet unseen creative media use.

As social and cultural uses of media evolve, these will find expression in the law. The law, after all, is a formal system for the governance of culture.

CONCLUSION

Media practitioners are subject to the same laws as are all other citizens. Everyone who publishes on any media platform needs to be mindful of the potential to defame or breach contempt laws, to breach a confidence, to illegally invade privacy or to breach copyright. Safe publishing does not require a lawyer's knowledge, but rather an awareness of the boundaries of particular laws. Breaches of media law are constantly occurring, but equipped with a working knowledge of concepts, frameworks and general legal literacies relevant to their roles as content creators (as discussed in this chapter), media practitioners will be able to confidently and effectively work in the evolving media and communications industries.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Media practitioners learning the ropes will need to develop an understanding of a range of key concepts, frameworks and general legal literacies that are relevant to their roles as content creators.
- There are two principal sources of law: statute law and common law. The former refers to laws enacted by state or federal parliaments, while the latter refers to judge-made law as decided in specific cases over time and through the interpretation of statutes.
- Media practitioners might be parties to criminal or civil actions, depending on the nature of the published material.
- The High Court of Australia has ruled that there is an implied constitutional freedom of expression in political and government matters, even though Australia has no constitutional bill of rights.
- In media workplaces the threat of defamation is constant. Journalists often check only the articles they think might be defamatory, sometimes overlooking the very ones that turn out to be offensive.
- The rules of defamation also apply irrespective of the means of distribution; however, the internet problematises jurisdiction.
- Contempt of court refers to any action with the potential to damage a fair trial.
- In Australia, there is no specific statutory privacy tort or wrong defined in legislation. Privacy in Australia has arisen as a patchwork of laws and regulations.
- Many of the laws that have been developed in the context of existing media may also be relevant to new media, such as the internet and social media applications.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What categories of legal knowledge do media practitioners need to do their work responsibly? Are the ideas of responsibility and accountability fundamental to media work?
- 2 In what ways might freedom of expression debates shape the work of media practitioners? Is this any different in social media contexts?
- 3 What are some other examples of potentially risky scenarios where media stories may give rise to defamation?
- 4 In what ways could Australia's new mandatory data retention laws undermine democratic systems of governance?
- 5 When Edward Snowden blew the whistle on Western governments' mass-scale data collection, which implications—those concerning the rights of privacy, freedom of expression or the right to access information—were the most far-reaching for the role of journalists?

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- Evidence Act 2006* (NZ)
- Evidence Amendment (Journalists' Privilege) Act 2010* (Cth)
- Human Rights Act 2004* (Cth)
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19

CONVERGENCE

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters we have considered a number of media industries as discrete entities, including print, radio, film, television, digital and social media. As you read through these chapters you may have noticed that they are often quite interdependent; that is, many of the industries overlap, and almost seem to come together at certain points. This is becoming even more prevalent in the digital and social media environment we outlined in Chapter 4. Convergence is one of the ways we can describe this coming together of media industries.

In this chapter we look at:

- what convergence is
- forms of convergence
- the impacts of convergence.

WHAT IS CONVERGENCE?

Convergence: The coming together of what were once separate media texts and industries.

Convergence is the coming together of what were once separate media texts and industries. As media theorist Henry Jenkins (2006: 282) notes, convergence is both ‘an ongoing process’ and a ‘series of interactions between media systems, not a fixed relationship’. Convergence is a historical process that is now accelerating, thanks to the possibilities afforded by digital and social media (see Chapter 4).

We can understand media industries operating quite similarly to the media texts that they produce as they often rely upon each other to produce meaning. We can therefore think of media industries, such as media texts, working together (becoming convergent) in a number of ways:

- As we saw in Chapters 9 and 10, media industries can work hegemonically to produce certain ways of looking at the world (discourses) and thus reinforce a certain ideology. We could think here of Fox News (television) and News Limited (print) working together hegemonically to produce a certain discourse of US foreign policy—for example, that intervention in Iraq was the correct foreign policy, and that the USA is justified in intervening in other areas of the world—reinforcing the ideology that US foreign policy is correct and should be exported to other countries.
- Media industries can also work pluralistically, offering different discourses. For an easy example of this, think about the differences between radio and television coverage of a cricket match. In radio coverage listeners are guided by the voice of the commentator, but much is left to the imagination of the individual listener. On television, exceptional catches or runs scored can be fetishised by being replayed over and over again from different angles. Radio, then, foregrounds the sounds of the game and the skills of the entire team, while television foregrounds—often through the use of sophisticated technology—the individual players and the environment in which the game is played.
- Media industries can also work intertextually; for example, a number of television series have been turned into films, radio series have become television series and comic books have become films. As we have previously seen, an increasing number of new media texts are often the product of media companies raiding their own back catalogues of media product to develop media texts that may work in other formats. *Tron*, *Star Trek* and *The Walking Dead* are examples of this.
- As we saw in Chapter 11, we can think of some media industries, such as the music and celebrity industries (both as industries in their own right and through their attendant industries of publicists, PR, agents and spin doctors) as already being convergent media industries.
- Convergence has an impact on the ways in which media industries participate in the mediasphere.

BLURRING THE DISTINCTION

Convergence fundamentally affects not only the structure of media industries but also the ways in which they participate in the mediasphere, because it blurs the distinctions between production and distribution—between content and **carriage**.



#Carriage: Those industries responsible for distributing media content.

Through convergence, a number of industries that were previously involved only in carriage, such as the Australian telecommunications company Telstra, have now moved into the production of content. Similarly, **content providers**, such as film studios, have moved into carriage by, for example, buying cinema chains that show their films. Increasingly, any industry that wants to be part of the global connectivity that is the internet must invest in network carriage systems.

#Content providers: Media industries that actually produce content, which is then distributed by carriers.

LITERATURE

Print literature is an industry that is often seen as being in decline. Headlines frequently bemoan book sales being lower than they once were. However, with the shift in the broader mediasphere towards more long-form, serial storytelling, shared universes and the capture of passionate niche audiences (rather than a mass), the print industry has become a vitally important content industry.

When *Harry Potter* proved that a franchise built around the young adult genre of fiction (increasingly defined as books which appeal to adults as much as teens) could be enormously profitable, the young adult market became one of Hollywood's primary content industries. The *Twilight*, *Hunger Games* and *Divergent* films were successes, but *Mortal Instruments* and *The Golden Compass* less so.

Nor is it only newer books that provide content. Jane Austen's novels continue to provide content for adaptation and reimagination for both film and television.

If we extend the definition of print literature to comics (and why shouldn't we?) then we could equally point to comics as one of the main content providers for Hollywood blockbusters as well as a more diverse range of genre offerings; for example, *Ghost World*, *Road to Perdition* and *V for Vendetta*.

While the tie-in novelisation based on a film may be a thing of the past (though book series based on franchise universes continue to sell well), quite apart from their own sales, the print literature industry continues to serve a vital role in the mediasphere as a content industry.

REASONS FOR CONVERGENCE

Convergence seems to be primarily motivated by two concerns: economics and power.

Convergence is often economically motivated: a strategy to maximise profits by managing media industries to work together on a common project. The *Idol*, *X Factor*, *The Voice* and the *America/Britain/Australia's Got Talent* programs, for example, are the products of convergence between (at least) three media industries: television (where the series is aired), telecommunications (where voting is conducted) and music (where the end product will be distributed). Programs such as these provide economic benefits for the television, telecommunications and music industries by increasing exposure across the three platforms, thereby maximising the profits that could have been made if it had been broadcast across only one platform.

Convergence can also be ideologically motivated; that is, a way to hegemonically promote a certain discourse (see Chapter 1). The media moguls who own multiple media industries can preserve their power base by reinforcing their views on a certain issue consistently across multiple platforms.

There is a tension at the heart of convergence between those who have traditionally controlled the tools of production and those who are increasingly being provided those tools to participate and engage more directly with media industries. We explore this tension in more detail below.

TYPES OF CONVERGENCE

Convergence describes a series of changes that take four forms:

- cultural convergence
- industrial convergence
- technological convergence
- narrative convergence.

Before we look at each of these in detail, it's worth briefly examining the relationships between convergence, different media industries and the audience.

The above forms of convergence are not exclusive. Industrial convergence, for example, usually depends upon technological convergence to produce narrative convergence, which can then lead to a wider cultural convergence, depending on the extent of ownership. They frequently overlap to such a degree that we could almost call them a convergence of convergences.

Convergence also involves a number of other media industries that, for reasons of space, we cannot explore in greater detail in this book, such as the merchandising and telecommunications industries. We refer to them briefly in this chapter to illustrate certain points around how convergence works.

The relationship between convergence and the audience takes three main forms:

- Cultural convergence can produce mass audiences by broadcasting media products across the globe.
- Technological convergence can also produce niche audiences by narrowcasting to a few thousand people.
- To function well, convergence often depends upon another increasingly important type of audience: the fan audience.

Fans are people who follow a particular media form, genre or personality with great enthusiasm, for the pleasure of doing so rather than a desire to earn an income. Developing a fan base or fan following for certain media texts is becoming increasingly desirable as audiences fragment, and even more desirable for convergent industries, as fans will often lead investment in media texts and pursue media texts across multiple delivery platforms.

Fans are therefore economically important to media industries, for their loyalty to various media properties and for their investment in said properties. More importantly, it is fans who increasingly generate the move towards convergence, either through their investment in media properties or by more actively pressing for convergent opportunities themselves.

We can think of this as **fan culture**, which is increasingly converging with mainstream or industrial media culture, to the point that the three are becoming more and more indistinguishable. This is in part driven by the fact that people who were 'fans' of media products in the past (such as comics

fan culture: Term derived from 'fanatic'; those people who follow a particular media form, genre or personality with great enthusiasm, for the pleasure of doing so rather than a desire to earn an income.

or toys) are now responsible for ‘greenlighting’ projects in film and television (greenlighting means giving permission to proceed or go ahead with a project).

While fans have been the subject of ridicule and derision in the past, for such behaviour as wearing anoraks and singing Klingon death chants at funerals, it is worth acknowledging the increasing importance of fan audiences in contemporary media culture, both behind the scenes and as passionate audience members.

Convergence, then, can be thought of as a double-edged sword, simultaneously reinforcing the economic power of those controlling media industries and giving economic power back to the consumers, especially the fans. This is the tension at the heart of convergence.

Tron



A number of these ideas are demonstrated in Disney’s Tron franchise. *Tron*, released in 1982, took the audience inside the Grid, a virtual reality and forerunner of the internet literally made up of humanoid programs in blue light suits. In the central struggle between the Master Control Program (MCP) and the individual user Flynn (Jeff Bridges) and ‘program’ Tron (Bruce Boxleitner), it offered a metaphor for the struggle between private ownership and private access that was to become an important issue for cyberspace in the subsequent decades. A critical and commercial failure on release, *Tron* nevertheless developed a strong fan following over the succeeding decades as an innovator in special effects (it features some of the earliest digital animation and was thereby excluded from Oscar contention that year for cheating) and cyberpunk sensibility (as embodied by the anti-establishment Flynn)—so much so that Disney revived the franchise with a successful 3D sequel in 2011, *Tron Legacy*. Extradiegetically, the existence of the *Tron* franchise is a confirmation of fan power, while diegetically it speaks to the ongoing problematic tension between fans and producers—between freedom and control.

CULTURAL CONVERGENCE

Cultural convergence refers to the ways in which different cultures are coming together through media. This is not a homogenisation of culture, as is sometimes suggested—that is, the argument that US culture is becoming the sole media cultural form in the world—but rather the tendency of cultural convergence to mix cultures rather than dilute them and, more importantly, the way one culture can inform another.

Cultural convergence is increasingly being enabled by technology because technological advances have produced a world where global technology is erasing issues of geographical distance. As we saw in Chapter 4, the compression of time and space is one of the facilities offered by social media, which we can see manifested in social networking websites such as Facebook and the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), which converts voices into digital signals that can travel over the internet via a broadband connection.

During the 1800s, technologies such as the telegraph, the railway and the steamship did much to bring the world together and compress time and space. In that era, **globalisation** was pursued

#Cultural convergence:

The intersection of cultures: locally, nationally and globally.

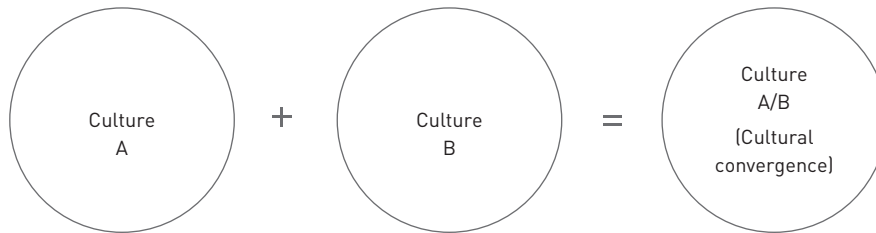
#Globalisation:

The tendency towards increasing standardisation of life, markets and economies around the world.

aggressively through imperialism and colonialism, as evidenced by the British empire, which sought to unify the world according to one common global set of standards—its own.

We can think of cultural convergence as being a positive or a negative aspect of the modern multimediated world.

FIGURE 19.1 Cultural convergence



WHY CULTURAL CONVERGENCE AND NOT GLOBALISATION?

Since cultural convergence shares a great deal in common with globalisation, why not just use that term? Globalisation refers to the increasing standardisation of life, markets and economies around the world. It can be used negatively to refer to a process of homogenisation, where everything is becoming the same, or it can be used positively to refer to the ways some cultures can influence others. Essentially, it refers to a change in perspective: from thinking about individual nation-states to thinking globally in terms of global poverty, global markets and global issues, such as environmental degradation.

Cultural convergence refers to the coming together of cultures—not just world cultures (such as, say, Indian, American, Japanese and Russian) but also subcultures (such as goth, queer and punk) and cultures based around questions of taste and class (such as high culture, low culture, pub culture or working-class culture). It is therefore a more general and inclusive term than globalisation, and is more closely allied to media.

Examples of cultural convergence, then, would not only include *Ugly Betty* (Latino culture) and *Iron Chef* (Japanese culture), but also *Queer as Folk* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* (queer culture), *Roseanne* and *The Royle Family* (working-class culture), and *Frasier* and *My Name is Earl*, which can be viewed as deconstructions of high and low culture, respectively.

The cultural imperialism hypothesis

The cultural imperialism hypothesis of globalisation and cultural convergence maintains that the current move towards global thinking reinforces a form of media imperialism, in which the dominance of a few multinational media conglomerates causes not only a narrowing of opinion but also an increasing homogenisation of media product and opinion.

The cultural imperialism hypothesis states that there is a unidirectional flow of media and culture, by which everything in the world is becoming the same (homogeneous). It is also referred to as 'Americanisation', as the USA is the world's largest producer of popular culture, or, more specifically, 'Disneyisation', 'McDonaldisation' or 'Coca-Colonisation' (with reference to popular

global brands). This negative view of US brands is hardly surprising when you consider that fifty-seven of the world's 100 most valuable brands are owned by US companies (see www.interbrand.com); for more on this view, see Dorfman and Mattelart (1991).

ANIME AND MANGA

Anime and manga are, respectively, animation and comic books from Japan, directed at adults rather than children. Increasingly, both forms have become global media forms, not only original *anime* and *manga*, such as the films of Studio Ghibli and television series such as *Pokemon*, *Naruto*, *Attack on Titan*, *Death Note* and *Yu-Gi-Oh*, which are doing well in the global market, but also the *anime/manga* look (and occasionally the sensibility), which is becoming the standard for Western animation. Look at animated series such as Nickelodeon's *Avatar* or *Super Robot Monkey Team Hyperforce Go*. Other forms of Western media are being revised and remodelled with an *anime/manga* look, such as Nancy Drew and Alex Rider. Here, then, is cultural convergence in action, where the coming together of Japanese and Western cultures creates new media properties.

In the same way, global reality television franchises—emerging from such countries as Germany and New Zealand—influence and shape global media cultures. For an example of a truly convergent text, look again at Nickelodeon's cartoon *Avatar*. It features a largely Chinese-derived storyline (both the avatar Aang's journey and relationship with the Fire Nation parallels that of the Dalai Lama) and is produced in the USA with a Japanese *anime* style and sensibility.



#Anime and manga:

Styles of Japanese animation and comic books, respectively, covering a wide variety of genres, and often appealing equally to adults and children; *manga* often provides the basis for *anime* productions.

Hybridity, domestication and indigenisation

Other theories about globalisation prefer to concentrate on the differentiation and diversification that can occur through cultural convergence. These are collectively referred to as forms of **glocalisation**, whereby global texts are transformed to become relevant to local cultures. They are hybridity, domestication of texts and indigenisation.

- **Hybridity** is the mixing of cultures to create something new—a multi-originated approach to media (also see Chapter 20). Hybridity is often the result of the creation of a **diaspora**: the scattering of populations, voluntary or otherwise, throughout the world from a single geographic area. The reasons for travel can be diverse, ranging from the slave trade (the movement of African-American communities from the 1600s to the 1900s) through to famine, the desire for better education or simply travel, but the end result is the creation of dispersed and hybrid communities that bring elements of their own cultures to other cultures.
- **Domestication of texts** is the way in which global texts are adapted for use by local individuals and communities. Just as animals, such as dogs and horses, and plants were domesticated for use by ancient communities, so too are media texts. Television franchises, for example, such as *Dancing with the Stars* or *Idol*, are domesticated for local audiences with some adjustments in format, plus a local host and local celebrities. Domestication can also negatively impact on a text, as when local areas impose censorship on scenes that offend particular cultural, religious or racial sensitivities.
- **Indigenisation** is similar to domestication in its reference to the ways in which global texts are adapted for use by local individuals and communities. But indigenisation more often

#Glocalisation: The transformation of global texts so that they become relevant to local cultures.

#Hybridity: The mixture of media cultures to create a multi-originated media.

#Diaspora: The scattering of a population from one geographical area throughout the world.

#Domestication of texts: The adaptation of global texts by individuals and local media cultures.

#Indigenisation: The appropriation and reframing of globalised texts to make them relevant to local cultures.

refers to the process by which this occurs: how global texts are appropriated and remodelled, reframed or reinscribed, to be made relevant to local cultures. An interesting by-product of this appropriation and reinscription is that the end product can then be re-exported to other markets. Some Japanese *anime* in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, were appropriated and reinscribed in the USA as *Robotech*, then re-exported to English-speaking countries around the world. The classic US sitcom *All in the Family* is a US adaptation of the British sitcom *Till Death Do Us Part*, with both being exported to Australia.

What is common across these three forms of glocalisation is a shared focus on the positive aspects of cultural convergence: the new and very different media texts that can be produced through this sharing of cultures.



#Multiculturalism:

The conferring of equal rights on the many distinct cultural groups that make up a society.

#Interculturalism:

The interaction, sharing and exchange between cultures, wherein each culture benefits from exposure to the other.

WHAT ABOUT MULTICULTURALISM?

Multiculturalism is an ideology that advances the idea that society should consist of a number of distinct cultural groups that are afforded equal status. It is ideologically opposed to the notion of monoculturalism.

Whereas multiculturalism is based around the idea of cultures being distinct and separate, cultural convergence is founded on an ideology of **interculturalism**, allowing for mutually beneficial cultural exchanges, whereby cultures can be influenced and educated by and about other cultures. It differs quite substantially from multiculturalism, and is the preferred term for our purposes.



Fraggle Rock

For an example of multiculturalism and interculturalism in practice, look at the Jim Henson television series *Fraggle Rock*. Specifically designed for an international audience, the human ‘wraparound’ segments (featuring an older man and his dog) were produced separately in several countries so as to reflect the local cultures in which they were shown (inventor Doc and Sprocket in the USA, Canada and Australia, lighthouse keeper the Captain and Sprocket in the UK, baker Doc and Croquette in France, etc.). More importantly, the series featured three separate species—the fun-loving Fraggles, the tiny work-loving Doozers and the large tradition-loving Gorgs—all living around the titular rock. The series celebrates each of these groups as distinct cultural groups (multiculturalism) but as the series progress it becomes more and more apparent how much each group depends on the other for survival, although they’re often impeded by their differences in biology and communication. Over the course of five seasons they learn to interact, share and exchange ideas with each other—the very essence of interculturalism.



WHAT ABOUT NATIONAL CULTURES?

One of the common arguments against cultural convergence and globalisation is that we need to protect national cultures. This stance underpins Australian local content laws, and certainly is an attractive idea for ensuring that communities continue to see their own stories and hear their own voices in the media that they consume.

What, really, is a national culture? Media theorist Tom O'Regan (1993: 59) refers to the 'double face' of popular culture, be it European, British or Australian. This is the blend of local and imported product that produces 'an amalgam of different cultures ... and multiple identities' (O'Regan 1993: 96). Here, O'Regan is pointing out that national cultures are already a product of cultural convergence, and while any attempt to protect local content should be applauded, we should not lose sight of the fact that national cultures are already convergent ones.

O'Regan is more particularly referring to the Australian media culture here, but in his description of the 'Australian and US trade in drama programs' as 'part of a wider system of exchange and similarity' (O'Regan 1993: 88), we can find parallels with British and European program exchanges, particularly franchises in reality television such as *Big Brother* and talent shows such as *Dancing with the Stars*, suggesting his notion of a 'double culture' can be more broadly applied.

Cultural convergence and media

How, then, can we account for the popularity of media texts across global cultures, particularly those with very different norms and values? There are two schools of thought; one that views cultural convergence positively, the other negatively.

A number of media commentators have argued that the ubiquity of US television is producing a global, hegemonic monoculture generated by a collective desire among most countries to emulate the Western lifestyle. This is leading to increased homogenisation and Americanisation of local content and, hence, a loss of national cultures.

By contrast, media theorist Scott Robert Olson (2004, following Bhabha 1994, among others) argues that 'although readers around the world are increasingly gaining access to the same materials to read, they do not have access to the same ways of reading' (Olson 2004: 114). Rather, Olson suggests that producers of US media texts, in particular, are good at making and exporting texts that easily blend into a variety of cultures. Olson calls this **narrative transparency**, which he defines as 'any textual apparatus that allows audiences to project indigenous values, beliefs, rites, and rituals into imported media or the use of those devices. This transparency effect means that American cultural exports [such as television] manifest narrative structures that easily blend into other cultures' (Olson 2004: 114). The end result is that US media texts 'seem familiar regardless of their origin [and] seem a part of one's own culture, even though they have been crafted elsewhere' (Olson 2004: 120).

Narrative transparency therefore allows for cultural convergence by allowing other cultures' artefacts to be folded back into, and made a part of, the receiving culture's culture.

#Narrative transparency:

A textual process by which audiences can project their own values, beliefs, rites and rituals into imported media and make use of these devices.

INDUSTRIAL CONVERGENCE

Industrial convergence refers to the convergence of different media industries. It involves two aspects: cross-ownership and cross-promotion.

#Industrial convergence:

The intersection of a variety of media industries through cross-media ownership and cross-promotion.

FIGURE 19.2 Industrial convergence

$$\text{Industrial convergence} = \frac{\text{Cross-promotion (seen)}}{\text{Cross-ownership (unseen)}}$$

Cross-ownership is the consolidation of the control of a variety of media companies and industries (and therefore power) in the hands of a few major companies.

Cross-ownership is the consolidation of the control of a variety of media companies and industries (and therefore power) in the hands of a few major companies. Historical examples include:

- William Randolph Hearst at the end of the 19th century
- Rupert Murdoch during the past forty years
- the Time-Warner conglomerate since the early 1970s
- the state, in countries where it is the government that controls television, radio and newspapers.

SOME FACTS ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP

Four Western news agencies supply 90 per cent of the world's press, radio and television.

Roy Greenslade (2003), a journalist at the *Guardian*, reviewed the editorial stance of the 175 Murdoch-owned newspapers worldwide, and found that all supported the invasion of Iraq. Rupert Murdoch himself admitted as much to an ABC journalist in October 2004: 'With our newspapers,' said Murdoch, 'we have indeed supported Bush's foreign policy. And we remain committed that way.'

Consolidation of ownership (and therefore power and control) remains an issue in most countries. The European Union has introduced regulations regarding cross-ownership, the USA opposes monopolies through antitrust laws, and Australia and Britain have competition laws designed to prevent this consolidation of power. Given the above statistics, we'll let you decide how well you think these laws are working.

Cross-ownership is also a behind-the-scenes aspect of industrial convergence because members of the public are rarely made aware of the connections between industries—who owns what. As we have demonstrated throughout this book though, ownership of particular industries can have a profound impact on media content.

Cross-promotion is the promotion by celebrities, programs and industries of other celebrities, programs and industries that have the same owner.

Examples include:

- the Australian media product *Better Homes and Gardens*, which exists as a television series and a magazine, and asks its readers and viewers to follow up stories in both formats
- *Dancing with the Stars*, which features contestants who are often celebrities from the host television network's other programs
- the US police franchise *Law & Order*, which regularly features crossovers between the various series in the franchises. Here the crossovers function as a form of cross-promotion, as they draw attention to these other series through the use of continuing narratives.

Cross-promotion: The promotion by celebrities, programs and industries of other celebrities, programs and industries that have the same owner.

A MOVE AWAY FROM PRODUCTION?

Clearly, cross-ownership and cross-promotion overlap. Industrial convergence is an important process not only because it raises concerns about ideology and hegemony, but also because it has the potential for shifting the focus of media industries away from production and towards the distribution and exploitation of archive material. In Chapter 4, we saw how a distributor of media, Google, rather than any content provider, has become the world's biggest media company.

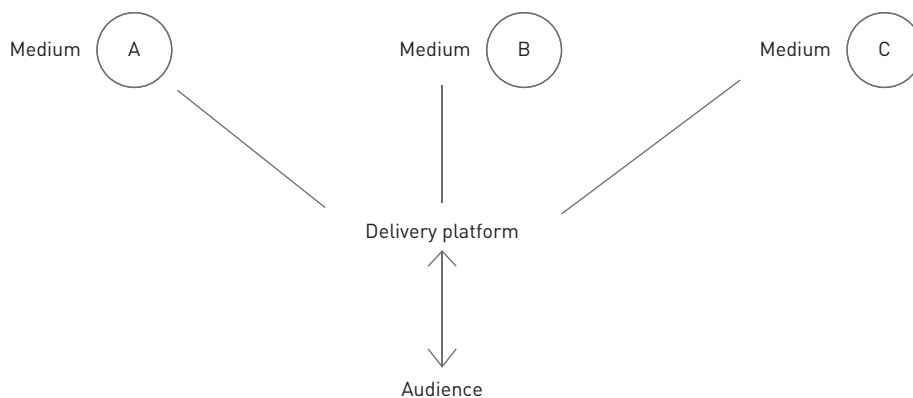
Frequently, companies will be bought and sold on the value of their back catalogue of media properties, which are then developed into different media forms. The *Superman* comic, for example, from DC Comics, existed as a television series *Smallville* on the WB network and a film franchise through Warner Brothers, all companies that are part of the larger Time-Warner conglomerate.

In part, this shift is a recognition of the importance of recognisable brand names and franchises for building audiences—audiences respond well to names they know and brands that have brought them pleasure in the past. Hence we have a film version of *The A-Team* and an updated version of the television series *Hawaii Five-0*.

But as media industries are also responsible for the production of culture, any change in this structure—such as a move away from production towards distribution and exploitation—could have a major impact on us as a creative society.

TECHNOLOGICAL CONVERGENCE

FIGURE 19.3 Technological convergence



Technological convergence is the intersection of media enabled by technological developments. When we think about technological convergence, we often think of the gaming industry, the internet or the telecommunications industry:

- The gaming industry is currently the most economically profitable media industry, with a regular turnover much greater than that of the film industry.
- The internet has completely revolutionised the way we communicate, do business and access the media, because it allows for ever-increasing interactivity.

#Technological convergence: Media intersection enabled by technological development.

- The growth in the telecommunications industry is a direct result of convergent applications, to the point that mobile phones are now a media platform in their own right, capable of accessing the internet and radio, taking photos, playing music and viewing television.

The only problem in writing about technological convergence is that inevitably by the time this book is published it will be hopelessly out of date. That said, in principle, technological convergence actually promises a variety of delivery systems or **delivery platforms** that are responsible for the dissemination of media texts and the ways in which those platforms and systems are increasingly converging into one site. Whereas media texts were once delivered across a variety of systems and platforms—print, television, cinema—increasingly one platform or system is being used to deliver a variety of different media texts. Think, for example, of the iPad or Xbox.

For more on the technology at the heart of technological convergence, see Chapter 4.

Delivery platforms: The ability of media to act as platforms for the delivery of media texts.



Microsoft's Xbox 360

Gaming systems are now seen as one of the most effective delivery platforms because they are very popular, domestic (like television and radio), which means that they can become part of the living space, and allow for interactivity, especially through devices such as the Nintendo Wii and Microsoft's Kinect, which encourage more physical activity as part of the gaming experience.

Microsoft's development of the Xbox 360 game console is a good example of convergent technology. The Xbox 360 is designed to play games, but can also display photos, play music, screen films and connect to the internet. According to the promotional literature around its launch in 2005, it was marketed as a 'multitalented, multitasking, multimedia machine'. It is, therefore, a perfect example of an all-purpose delivery platform.

Underscoring this development is (in Microsoft's terms) a move towards the digital entertainment lifestyle (DEL). Here, through digital technology, all media will merge into a single integrated, portable, customisable media gestalt; some writers have even taken to calling this a digital or electronic ecosystem.

Although this development reinforces Microsoft's economic power, it also returns some power to the fans, because the projected Xbox Live permits fans to sell their customised versions of Microsoft games online.

As Bill Gates, founder and then CEO of Microsoft, noted on its initial release in 2005: 'You can't just sell it [the Xbox 360] as a convergence device. You gotta get it in there because certain members of the family think it's a must-have item.'



The internet

Unsurprisingly, the internet is at the forefront of convergent applications, not only because it has the capability to carry all forms of media from newspapers and radio to film and music (or that it can bring them together), but rather because it:

- empowers people to produce, converging producers and consumers into the notion of the prosumer (see Chapter 10)
- enables people to receive information from all over the world, thus assisting cultural convergence
- permits the free flow of information, from reviews of films to neo-Nazi rhetoric and to porn; and, through downloading and shareware, circumvent other media industries.

The internet can also be seen as a confirmation of fan power because it builds on ideas that fan communities have been involved with for years: interactivity, community and production. It also provides fans with multiple ways of maintaining a stake in media properties, via sites such as YouTube and illegal downloading sites, or by burning illegal copies.

The internet really transfers the tools of production into the hands of the fans, which means that fan interest can have a real impact on the shelf life and future development of media, frequently leading to petitions for DVD releases.

Just look at Ain't It Cool News (www.aintitcool.com) if you want a confirmation of how the internet has empowered the fan.

The mobile phone



The mobile phone has become the pre-eminent delivery platform. In the past decade, the telecommunications industry—of which mobile phones are a part, along with data services, online services, search engines and rapid information transfers (particularly electronic commerce)—has become the world's fastest growing industry and the mobile phone the world's fastest developing delivery platform.

Currently, the mobile phone can connect to all of the telecommunications services mentioned above, take photos, download media content and play music. There is even content generated exclusively for the mobile: mobisodes, which deliver five-minute episodes of popular television dramas such as *Doctor Who*.

WHAT ABOUT MATERIAL CULTURE?



With all of this talk about digital culture, what about material culture, physical texts like toys and print items? Interestingly, material culture has been swept up in technological convergence too. Game stories are continued in books and comics. Toyetic representations of lead characters and monsters from most gaming franchises are available not just for children, but also for fans to display as they play along on their devices.

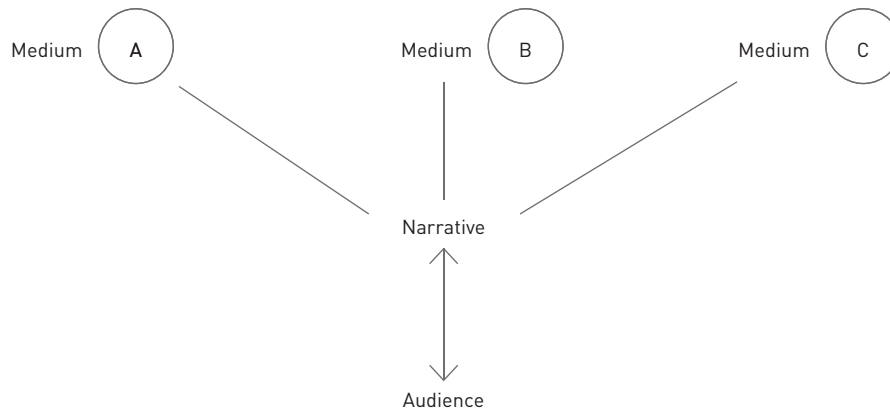
Indeed, physical toys are at the centre of the latest shift in gaming to revolutionise the industry. Skylanders, Disney Infinity and Amiibo each use plastic representations of characters that can then be digitally played with in the gaming systems. The toys themselves are collectible and perfect for display. The digital content makes them playable inside the game as well. Much like print literature, material culture is therefore playing a vital role in media convergence and the emergence of new trends in the wider mediasphere.

NARRATIVE CONVERGENCE

Narrative convergence: Narrative that does not originate from a single textual site but flows across, between and through a number of different delivery platforms.

Narrative convergence is narrative that does not originate from a single textual site, but instead flows across, between and through a number of different delivery platforms. This is possibly the most contentious of the forms of convergence presented here: the notion that a narrative can, in itself, function as a form of convergence. Other theorists refer to the concepts of transmedia narratives or synergy (see below), rather than considering narrative as a form of convergence in its own right. But given the fact that communication is central to media, and that narrative and the permutations of narrative (from interpellation through to news narratives, celebrity metanarratives and the metanarratives—or grand narratives—that underpin modernity have been part of our focus), it makes sense to think about the importance of narrative in the context of convergence.

FIGURE 19.4 Narrative convergence



A recognition of narrative convergence is a recognition of the power of narrative and the emergence of a new narrative form that will have an impact on media production and distribution well into the future.

Narrative convergence really exists distinct from technological convergence. Rather than bringing platforms together to create one portal, it acknowledges that there are different audience pleasures and engagements to be derived from consuming different media forms. It takes advantage of these differences by producing narratives that can work across a variety of different media platforms and systems. It is the narrative that provides the convergence rather than the underlying technology. It is the narrative that connects the different delivery systems and platforms.

Transmedia storytelling: Stories that are told across a number of different delivery platforms, with each platform carrying a slightly different aspect of the story.

Narrative convergence is built around the idea of **transmedia storytelling**. Henry Jenkins (2006: Chapter 3) coined this expression to describe stories that are told across a number of different delivery platforms, each platform highlighting different aspects and characters in the story. Jenkins looked at the concept in connection to *The Matrix*, which incorporated three films, games, graphic novels and an *anime* DVD, *The Animatrix*. The shared universes of Marvel Studios (and others) that we have talked about in relation to film would be the latest examples, though with some important caveats (see below).

Virginia Nightingale (2007) notes that this process makes stories similar to brands such as Disney and celebrities such as Britney Spears, in that they depend on an accumulation of intertexts to develop a complete narrative (just as celebrities did back in Chapter 11).

Narrative convergence, therefore, can be thought of as a development of **synergy**. In this context, synergy is ‘the combined marketing of products which are owned by the same corporation such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the different parts’ (Branston & Stafford 2006: 373). Synergy confers prominence through repetition: *Star Wars* books, toys, comics, games, cards, DVDs and soundtracks all work together to promote the *Star Wars* films and subsequent television series. As we saw in Chapter 10, intertexts work together to make a text significant. Repetition of a text across multiple intertexts will increase the prominence and perceived significance of that individual text. This is the basis for promotion—and the basis for synergy.

The total effect produced can be more complex than just synergistic. Narrative convergence occurs where the extratextual elements of media’s cultural circulation actually contribute to, and develop or enrich, its narrative; that is, where merchandising actually advances the story.

Why is transmedia storytelling a form of convergence? Because it brings all of these delivery platforms together around one media text, thereby encouraging audiences to adopt multiple delivery options over the text’s run. It also alters the dynamics of the producer–consumer relationship.

For now, it is enough to make a distinction between synergy, which is purely about economics and promoting a certain media text, and narrative convergence, also economic, but also in some way developing the media text’s narrative.

#Synergy: The combined marketing of products, owned by the same corporation, such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the parts.

CONVERGENT INDUSTRIES

We can now start to think of several media industries as being convergent industries in the context of narrative convergence.

THE COMIC INDUSTRY

We can think of the comic industry as a convergent industry because it supplements other industries’ narratives by adapting their stories into comic format—a process already popular before the rise of the video industry—and fulfils fans’ desires for new, ongoing narratives featuring beloved characters drawn from series such as *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, *The A-Team* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, through the Season 8, 9 and 10 comic book series. It also develops other industries’ creations into narrative forms such as *The Transformers*, *The Micronauts* and *GI Joe*. Finally, it is increasingly a content provider of stories and concepts for current Hollywood and television entertainment, reflected in the change from Marvel Comics to Marvel Characters and the development of Marvel Studios; DC’s role as part of Warner Bros; and Dark Horse Comics’s establishment of Dark Horse Entertainment to develop film properties based on their comic characters.

The comic industry is one of the first media industries where we can see fans in a dialogic relationship with media texts through conventions and **fanzines**. Because of the longevity of this industry, it is also one of the first media forms in which fans (consumers) such as Roy Thomas and Jim Shooter themselves became producers (writers and editors).

#Fanzine: An amateur magazine produced for fans of a pastime or celebrity; the concept originated among science fiction fans in the 1930s, spread gradually among other interest groups during the 1960s, and was adopted by a wide range of groups during the past twenty years.

THE MERCHANDISING INDUSTRY

#Merchandising: The marketing of a wide range of consumer goods bearing images from a specific media product.

Merchandising is the marketing of a wide range of consumer goods bearing images from a specific media product. The merchandising industry is usually credited as beginning with Walt Disney animations of the 1930s, including Mickey Mouse and *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937). It was fully realised with *Star Wars* (1977), and became a common global practice with the introduction of McDonald's Happy Meals in 1979, which started with a tie-in to *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*. The practice actually goes back to the beginning of the 20th century, with the efforts of early entrepreneurs such as L. Frank Baum and Edgar Rice Burroughs, creators of the *Wizard of Oz* and *Tarzan* respectively, to merchandise their creations.

Merchandising is important to narrative convergence because it can enrich narratives by providing greater background detail about places and characters, as well as enabling consumers to create their own narratives through play.

More significantly, the merchandising industry really gives fans pure economic power. Whereas fans of *Cagney and Lacey* and the original *Star Trek* could only write letters to the networks pleading for the television series to be spared from cancellation, now fans have real economic power to influence the decisions of media industries. Enormous merchandise sales, particularly DVDs, was one of the reasons the animated television series *Family Guy* was returned to the airwaves by Fox following its cancellation. It also explains how the science fiction western *Firefly* became the film *Serenity* (DVD sales, again, made it a potentially profitable venture) and how the shelf life was improved for equally short-lived series such as *Life As We Know It*, *Wonderfalls* and *Space: Above and Beyond*, which all continue to sell well as DVD box sets, even though they were axed after just one broadcast season apiece.

Why is narrative convergence important?

Narrative convergence encourages consumers, particularly fans, to be producers—or prosumers. This is the final evolution of the active audience we first discussed in Chapter 10: the final crossing of the divide between producers and consumers. Increasingly, these properties continue to be important over generations: *Superman* has been with us since the 1930s, *Doctor Who* since the early 1960s, *Star Trek* since the late 1960s and *Star Wars* since the 1970s; and fans, the former consumers of the product, are moving into positions where they can take control of and responsibility for the content.

Until recently, fans of particular media texts were limited to illegal activities or playing in the margins of media texts. Scholars such as Jenkins (2006) have explored the ways in which fan communities became participatory communities through conventions, **fan fiction**, unauthorised fiction based on the media products and **slash fiction**: fiction that serves as unauthorised extensions of the media products, generally sexual and often homosexual in nature.

With technological and narrative convergence, fans suddenly have the opportunity to engage directly with the media product. It's no longer just fan fiction: they can actually bring the property back (as in the comic book revivals of 1980s properties *GI Joe* and *The Thundercats*) or write official

fan fiction: Fiction, written by fans of a particular media text, that features characters from that text.

slash fiction: unauthorised fiction, written by fans of a particular media text, that features characters from that text in narratives that are sexual, and often homosexual, in nature.

tie-ins to extend the life of the property (as with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Star Trek*). In effect, they become the authorised producers of the text. This has several consequences:

- The status of commercial or popular culture is affected, as it becomes ‘a potential source of status rather than the thing the elite define themselves against’ (Seabrook 2001). Think, for example, of the economic value of the nostalgia industry, of eBay as the cultural barometer of what is valuable and therefore highly praised by society, or the phenomenon of geek chic, where it is almost trendy to be geeky about popular culture.
- It changes the way media texts are produced. Media designers are encouraged to think in terms of world-building—of creating a universe or detailed secondary world—that can be exploited for franchise potential or marketing spinoffs. They are encouraged to create media properties that have the potential for narrative convergence built into them.
- Narrative convergence is economically important, as it increases the shelf life, and therefore the profitability, of a property by increasing its cultural circulation. This makes us rethink how capitalism, the ideology underlying commercial culture, works. Capitalism becomes not only a process of making money but also a process of generating new ways of making money. Capitalism becomes a productive discourse.

OUR MODERN MYTHS?

It can be argued that convergence is part of mythmaking in that it enables media texts to become our modern myths. Increasing the shelf life of a media product recasts the product as a modern myth because jumping media is quite similar to the ways in which the ancient myths of Greece and Rome were told across different media, such as pottery, painting, poetry, plays and song. This is even parodied in a scene from Disney’s *Hercules* film. This serial repetition and development across different delivery platforms creates a sense of being mythic and, judging from the sheer volume of sites devoted to these often obscure media texts, a great number of these media properties have indeed become cultural touchstones and modern myths for a vast array of people, especially those born in the 1970s and 1980s.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF CONVERGENCE ON MEDIA?

Convergence has had three significant impacts:

- *On control*: convergence is a double-edged sword. Because of changes in the means of production, fans have greater power over media than ever before, from having the opportunity to become authorised producers to participating in and archiving what is important to them on YouTube. Yet these platforms are still the properties of media corporations, so fans as authorised producers are still involved in the perpetuation and maintenance of these corporations’ power bases. Only through illegal or illicit activities is some form of fan resistance maintained, which is usually disempowered or undermined by the fact that it is inauthentic.



- *On journalism*: just as the means of production empowers fans, so it also empowers citizens to become journalists. The phenomenon of the citizen journalist—who operates through blogs and web pages or by being witness to breaking news and taking photos with mobile phones—is also a result of convergence. Consumers of news are having a great deal more influence over news production than they would have had in the past. Furthermore, it is technology that is altering the delivery of news stories and the recording of new events. For more on this, see Bromley (2004), who refers to the ways in which journalism is being affected by the convergence of technologies and ownership, which alters attitudes towards the previously distinct forms of journalism in press and broadcasting. Branston and Stafford (2006: 200) also refer to some of these.
- *On image*: as celebrities function across a number of different media platforms, the ability to speak publicly and present well becomes increasingly necessary, regardless of whether they are rock stars, politicians or authors. Maintaining a consistent image can become a full-time job, and create its own sub-industries, such as public relations agents, stylists, personal assistants and image consultants, teams of people dedicated to constructing and maintaining the most familiar representations of these public figures in the mediasphere.

CONCLUSION

Convergence, the various intersections developed between aspects of the media, has always been a part of media's development, and will continue to be so in the digital and social media environment for the foreseeable future, continually changing in response to new technological developments and innovative ideas. Most importantly, convergence will become the site where issues of power and control will continue to be contested between those who originate media content and those who engage with it.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Convergence is the coming together of what were once separate media texts and industries.
- Media industries are becoming convergent in three ways: hegemonically (to reinforce dominant ideologies), pluralistically (offering different discourses) and intertextually (as in a television series being turned into a film).
- Convergence is primarily motivated by two concerns—economics and power— and can broadly be divided into four forms: cultural, industrial, technological and narrative.
- Cultural convergence refers to the ways in which different cultures are coming together through media.
- Industrial convergence refers to the convergence of different media industries and involves two aspects: cross-ownership and cross-promotion.
- Technological convergence is the intersection of media enabled by technological developments, particularly through gaming platforms, the internet and the telecommunications industry.
- Narrative convergence is narrative that does not originate from a single textual site, but instead flows across, between and through a number of different delivery platforms.
- Convergence has a significant impact on the control of fans over media, on the ability of citizens to operate as journalists, and on the need for celebrities to control their image.

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20

POSTMODERNITY

JASON BAINBRIDGE

INTRODUCTION

Nobody likes postmodernity, right? Postmodernity is one of those words that provokes great debate among academics ... and stifled yawns among almost everyone else. It's often regarded as outdated, a bad word and really quite rubbish. And that's just the view of the people who do like it. So why are we making it the last chapter of our book again? Because it's still important.

In the past we did not recognise the rights of women to vote. We did not recognise Indigenous ownership in Australia or the wrong that was done to the Stolen Generations. We did not fight for equal rights for homosexuals or refugees. We did not debate environmental issues. So what are the things we don't see today? What are the problems that will make people ask in the future: How could they not see that? How could they not act on that?

That is why postmodernity can help us. It is about optimism, about idealism, about thinking of the alternative point of view and about thinking outside the box. Postmodernity is about the potential and the possibility of media and journalism to make real, lasting, positive change. That is why it is so important and that is why it remains our final chapter.

The problem is that postmodernity is also a big complex idea that has been made even more complex by being extended in an attempt to explain just about everything. 'Postmodernity', 'postmodern' and 'postmodernism' are used fairly interchangeably in academia and in the wider community. Indeed, 'postmodernity' has been used so widely, in so many contexts, that the word itself is at risk of having no meaning: everything seems capable of being classed as postmodern—from art and film through to thought and writing.

In textual analysis terms, we could almost call postmodernity an empty signifier, because the term has been stretched and adapted so much that it no longer produces a clear signified. Even so, postmodernity remains a useful tool, particularly for people engaging with the media, as it is a way of:

- understanding the changing relationship between media and society
- analysing the textual and industrial structure of media forms
- taking account of different points of view when making decisions or producing your own media texts.

These are all important considerations for anyone working with media. We should all be aware of the history of media and the history of ideas. Similarly, we should all be respectful of difference and diversity.

This is our last full chapter. It relies on all that you have read in the previous chapters and it also takes us back to the theoretical approaches discussed in Chapters 2, 9 and 10.

This chapter is, therefore, part rehabilitation and part definition of the importance of postmodernity, for now and for the future. It aims to:

- provide a workable definition of postmodernity applicable in the context of media theory and media practice
- explain why postmodernity is an important concept for media practitioners
- provide examples of postmodern media texts.

In so doing, we acknowledge that other theorists and other practitioners will have their own definitions, and that debates over the correct use or utility of the term postmodernity will be ongoing. But this is the formation of postmodernity that works for us, and the one we would encourage producers and consumers to hang onto in the years ahead.

WHAT IS POSTMODERNITY?

Let's start by taking the word itself and breaking it down bit by bit:

postmodernity

or

post + modern + ity

Post modern ity

The first thing to notice is the prefix 'post'.

The common misconception is that *post* means *after*, as in 'post mortem' or acting 'post haste'. People assume that postmodernity comes after modernity (we look at modernity in more detail below).

But in this instance post means *it isn't something any more*. It's a break with something, an alternative perspective on something. So in this case it isn't related to modernity or something subsequent to modernity—it's a break with the modern, an alternative perspective on the modern. It's a break with tradition. It's thinking outside the box, or standing in someone else's shoes. 'Post' here means something new, something different.

This means that postmodernity does not come after modernity. Rather, it coexists with modernity, as a corollary to modernity and running parallel to modernity. Think of two streams running side by side and you'll have a sense of the relationship between them. The view from one stream is slightly different from the view from the other stream, but they are both running in the same direction, and they both originate from the same source (discussed below.)

In fact, postmodernity is an inadequate word—'countermodernity' or 'paramodernity' would be more accurate terms. But though postmodernity is a problematic term, we use it here because academics and the general populace use it so much that it still serves as a convenient way of describing a challenge or, more precisely, an alternative to modernity.

Post modern ity

The second part of the word is 'modern'.

Modern here means *a particular way of representing or thinking about the world*, such as a discourse or a myth or an ideology (see Chapter 10). As we see below, modernity involves a number of discourses, myths and ideologies that work together to produce a way of looking at the world and/or organising the world that is so convincing that we often refer to it as *conventional* thinking.

POST + MODERN

Post + modern = a break with thinking about the world or looking at the world in a certain way. Postmodernity is, therefore, a new perspective on the modern, a challenge to the modern or an alternative view of the modern. In so doing, it recognises that there are limits to what modernity can provide.

Post modern ity

Notice the suffix 'ity'.

In some ways this is the most contentious bit of our definition, because we're using 'ity' rather than 'ism', which means that we are talking about post + modern + ity rather than post + modern + ism.

Though many writers conflate the two—that is, they use postmodernity and postmodernism interchangeably—they are quite different terms: *modernity* is a form of social organisation, but *modernism* is an artistic movement (see Felski 1995: 13).

The distinguishing factor, then, is that one is a social force (modernity) and the other is an aesthetic force (modernism). Postmodernity, then, is a new way of thinking about the world in terms of the social rather than the aesthetic forces. It represents a break with, a new alternative to and new perspective on what has come before.

Postmodernity certainly involves ideas of postmodernism—but postmodernism (the aesthetic) is only a symptom of postmodernity (the social movement). John Frow (1997), for example, refers to postmodernism as a genre of theoretical writing rather than a way of thinking about the world. To describe postmodernity as postmodernism would be like describing the flu as a cough.

WHAT ABOUT OTHER 'ISMS'?

You might ask, what about communism or fascism? Aren't these examples of 'isms' that are ways of thinking rather than aesthetic movements? Of course they are and many more besides. The point we are trying to make here is to draw a distinction between postmodernism and postmodernity. More broadly, other 'isms' like communism and fascism are *ideologies*, whereas postmodernity is a much larger way of thinking that can subsume ideologies like communism and fascism into its decision-making processes. Postmodernity is not an ideology in itself because it is not one way of thinking, but rather a form of thinking that encourages us to think about other ways of thinking. The difference is therefore one of scale, as will be demonstrated below.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN POSTMODERNITY AND POSTMODERNISM

A number of academic and popular texts do use these terms interchangeably, and a great deal more favour postmodernism over postmodernity, so it is important that we set out the relationship between postmodernism and postmodernity in some more detail:

- Postmodernity represents a break with conventional (modern) thinking.
- Postmodernity is therefore a change in the way that we think.
- Postmodernism is a change in the way we see.
- Postmodernism is also a change in the way that we produce.
- Postmodernism is often produced by a change in the way that we think (postmodernity).
- Postmodernity, the change in the way that we think, can therefore express itself through changes in the way that we see and the way that we produce (postmodernism).
- In turn, postmodernism can then be expressed through art (the change in the way that we see) and economics (the change in the way that we produce).



POSTMODERN FORMS

Examples of postmodern art include the work of Andy Warhol, the architecture of the Bonaventure Hotel and the media form of comic books (unfairly appropriated by Roy Lichtenstein, but better expressed in the many hundred of titles produced by the comics industry each month).

Examples of postmodern economics include the work of Robert Venturi, and the layout and development of theme parks such as Disneyland.

These are all postmodern forms because they are all marked by a return to the popular, the low culture and the vernacular. As such, they represent a break with the modern because they place an emphasis on the local and particular as opposed to the universality of modernity.

Many texts run through examples of postmodern aesthetics in detail, so we won't be doing that here. See the Key References list at the end of this chapter for more on postmodernism.

THE ASSUMPTIONS OF POSTMODERNITY

Having defined what we mean by postmodernity, let's now have a look at the theoretical assumptions that lie behind postmodernity. These are all derived from the pioneering work of French cultural theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984):

- As noted above, postmodernity is a corollary to modernity, not something that follows it or represents its conclusion. Postmodernity therefore represents a break with conventional thinking.
- Postmodernity is concerned with alternative knowledge structures and theories, rather than authorised or legitimate theories and institutions. Ultimately, this translates into a new economy (which we return to below).
- Postmodernity believes that modernity can be a limited way of thinking about and organising the world. It encourages us to question, to think outside the box and seek out alternative viewpoints.
- Postmodernity favours oscillation between, or consideration of, a number of points of view and ideologies, even points of view and ideologies that are in open competition with each other.
- To ensure that all viewpoints get a fair hearing, postmodernity will often favour the minority view.
- Postmodernity believes in a multiplicity of meanings rather than one unitary meaning. (You should already be noticing the utility of postmodernity for media studies, because it is in keeping with two concepts we have already considered: the polysemy of individual media texts and the pluralism of groups of texts or discourses.) Postmodernity celebrates this diversity and the possibility of this diversity.
- Postmodernity encourages consideration of premodern as well as modern knowledge structures.

ONE HISTORY OF WESTERN THOUGHT

As postmodernity does encourage the consideration of premodern and modern ways of thinking about the world, it is important to consider some previous streams of Western thought. One way of describing such a history is to divide it into three ways of seeing, representing and organising the world:

- premodern
- modern
- postmodern.

All three of these ways of thinking about the world are still with us today. But we can point to periods in time when premodernity and modernity (at least) were ascendant—and in this way understand where postmodernity is coming from, and what it is responding to.

Premodernity

Premodernity is the form of Western social organisation that held sway until the 16th century, involving:

- belief
- nature
- divine justice.

Premodernity is therefore defined by some form of religion: the belief that everything comes from a god or multiple gods. Hence, it is marked by mythology or paganism or the beginnings of organised religion. At the very centre of premodern society we find churches and storytellers. These are the origins of our modern media: organisations and individuals who mediate events to larger audiences through a series of representations.

Premodernity is still important for the following reasons:

- Religious discourse remains important in the public sphere; for example, in the current religion-based debates around teen sex and contraception, intelligent design and stem cell research, as well as the language used to justify the War on Terror.
- In premodern times we first see large numbers of people (congregations) being brought together (in church) and/or mobilised around a common ideology (religion), which set the template for today's media and politics.
- It gave us an oral and visual tradition that is the basis for most mass media forms. John Hartley (1992a, 1999, 2002b), for example, has argued that television performs some of the functions of the family and church in modern societies, in that it teaches us citizenship and how to place ourselves in relation to the rest of the world.
- It still informs a number of texts; for example, the belief in divine justice that underpins the superhero genre, a large number of police procedurals and violent government-sanctioned heroes, such as James Bond, 24's Jack Bauer—and pretty much all of Arnold Schwarzenegger's films. These heroes embody the premodern ideal of divine justice in that they dispense their

#Premodernity:

The mainstream of Western thought until the 19th century; its underlying beliefs were based on religion, nature and a sense of divine justice.

own brand of justice (beating up people or shooting them in the kneecaps) without resorting to the law.

FIGURE 20.1 The relationship between premodernity, modernity and postmodernity



Remember our analogy of modernity and postmodernity as streams running side by side? Premodernity is the lake from which our streams of modernity and postmodernity flow. That means premodern ideas continue to run through the waters ... but the world has moved away from the ascendancy of premodernity.

To help you identify premodern ideas, here is a checklist:

- Premodernity is a form of social organisation based on belief rather than researched evidence. As you will see throughout this chapter, all of these ‘-ities’ are forms of social organisation based around a way of thinking about the world.
- Premodernity is expressed through discourses of religion and nature, which often overlap. Therefore the symbol of premodernity (the signifier) is the pastoral scene.
- Premodernity can be gendered as either male or female. Most of these ‘-ities’ tend to be gendered in certain ways. The Judaeo-Christian-Islam God, for example, is usually gendered male (‘Our Holy Father’), whereas alternative religions privilege the Goddess. Relics of this thinking can be found in the conspiracy theory at the heart of Dan Brown’s bestseller, *The Da Vinci Code*, and the debates over the recognition versus the exclusion of femininity from religious thinking, including the traditional resistance in the churches to female clergy.

FIGURE 20.2 Premodernity: symbol and gender



The Name of the Rose



For an example of premodernity, look at this novel (1980) from author Umberto Eco adapted into a film (1986) by Jean-Jacques Annaud starring Sean Connery and Christian Slater. In many respects a murder mystery, *The Name of the Rose* explores the power and prominence of the church in premodern society, the importance of literacy and early media forms (represented by the Abbey's mediaeval library that features as part of the plot) and the suppression of subversive elements, such as sex and laughter, all with great period detail (a mixture of research and conjecture). Eco himself is a semiotician (one who practices semiotics) and a postmodernist. As a result, both the book and the film reinforce the postmodernist plea for a rejection of dogma or metaphysical truth in favour of alternative ways of being, providing a great overview of the relationship between pre- and postmodernity.

Modernity

Modernity is a form of social organisation based around notions of:

- progress
- rationality (evidence-based thought, and freedom and justice through the law)
- equality of human beings.

According to Childs (2000: 15), modernity was produced by 'a societal shift ... a way of living and of experiencing life which has arisen with the changes wrought by industrialization, urbanisation and secularisation'. This can be called modern living or the condition of modern life.

Modernity, as Felski (1995: 12) describes it, is not a 'homogeneous Zeitgeist which was born at a particular moment in history, but rather ... comprises a collection of interlocking institutional, cultural and philosophical strands which emerge and develop at different times and which are often only defined as "modern" retrospectively.'

As Sarup (1996: 50, citing Bauman) says, 'Modernity is associated with order, certainty, harmony, humanity, pure art, absolute truth.' Therefore, modernity marks a 'general philosophical distinction between traditional societies, which are structured around the omnipresence of divine

#Modernity: The mainstream of Western thought, from the 19th century until the late 20th century; its underlying beliefs were based on ideas of progress, rationality and equality.

authority, and a modern secularised universe predicated upon an individuated and self-conscious subjectivity' (Felski 1995: 13).

It might be easier if you think of modernity as an attitude rather than a specific time or place.

THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERNITY

There are multiple and contested accounts describing the beginnings of modernity. Here are three of the most prominent.

Possible historical origins

Modernity has been linked to the Renaissance, to the 17th-century scientific discoveries of Galileo, Newton and Descartes, to the 18th-century Age of Enlightenment (Habermas 1989) and to the period of European expansion (colonialism) (see Bhabha 1990).

The three-phase approach

- 1500–1800: the ascent of modern life
- the 1800s: the period of revolution
- the 1900s: global modernisation, incorporating early modernist theorists such as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Ferdinand Tonnies at the turn of the century, and later, the Frankfurt School, including Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin (see Berman 1983).

The multi-origined approach

Modernity begins:

- in politics with the French Revolution (18th century)
- in philosophy with the Enlightenment (18th century)
- in science with the experimental method (early 17th century)
- in industry, with the Industrial Revolution in Britain (late 18th and early 19th centuries) (Hartley 1999: 39).

The main elements

While a variety of theories have been advanced regarding the origin of modernity, generally all theorists agree that modernity involves the following elements:

- progress
- rationality
- equality.

These three elements are generally associated with the process of **enlightenment**, the process that marked the societal change from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, from traditional to more democratic societies and from premodernity to modernity.

The feudal hierarchies of the Middle Ages gave way to the 'modern secularised universe' made up of 'democratic' societies. They were democratic because they were founded on these Enlightenment values that were 'used as a guide to organising society' (McKee 2003: 6).

Enlightenment: The period, from about CE 1500 to about 1800, when feudal, religion-based societies gave way to secularised, more democratic societies.

While there was a transition from premodernity to modernity, not all elements of premodernity vanished overnight. Elements of premodern thinking remain a part of our societies to this very day. Enlightenment values include that:

- all citizens are of equal worth and importance (equality)
- everyone should be treated fairly (justice/equality)
- everyone should have control over their own lives (freedom)
- everyone has a right to a basic level of material welfare (equality/justice/comfort) (McKee 2003: 6).

The Enlightenment recognised that everyone could somehow make a contribution to society. It was the first recognition of the individual contribution to the greater good, and so marked the beginnings of democracy. That's why we can say modernity is a form of social organisation based around equality, rationality (leading to freedom and justice) and progress, because it is a desire to look forward to a perfectible future. In this sense modernity is always modern—always of the now—because it is always looking to the future.

A modern man: Tony Stark, Iron Man



We provide some more examples of modernity below, but if you're already struggling to get your head around the concept, then just think of Tony Stark, Marvel Comics's and Marvel Studios's Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr). Stark very much embodies these Enlightenment values that underpin modernity—he is a self-made individual, he fights for justice (as Iron Man), he is an industrialist and he is a futurist—and therefore he is always looking towards the future. Furthermore, his company, Stark Industries, is about providing a basic level of material welfare (moving from weapons manufacture into renewable energy) for all citizens.

Two mechanisms evolved to simultaneously enshrine and promote these Enlightenment values in modern societies:

- The public sphere (Habermas 1989): in which 'information, ideas and debate can circulate in society, and where political opinion can be formed' (Dahlgren 1995: ix). In such a society, citizens gain an input into political debates, thereby enshrining and promoting equality and, ideally, rationality. See Chapter 1 for more details.
- The **rule of law**: a society in which law is a mechanism to ensure equality, fairness, justice, freedom and the right to comfort, as opposed to arbitrary rules imposed by rulers on citizens. The rule of law became fundamental in transforming arbitrary authority into rational authority subject to the scrutiny of a citizenry, because it was law that organised this public body. The rule of law enshrines rationality and equality, while at the same time enabling progress based on clear rights and duties.

Together, the public sphere and the rule of law transformed feudal hierarchies into democratic modern societies based on Enlightenment values, sometimes by force, as in the case of the French and American Revolutions.

Again, if we created a checklist for modernity it would include the following:

- Modernity is a form of social organisation based on the idea of the democratic society.
- Modernity is expressed through discourses of knowledge such as law, science, medicine and philosophy.

#Rule of law: Consistent, fair rules of society that apply equally to all citizens.

- The symbol of modernity (the signifier) is the city.
- Modernity is often gendered as male.

Recalling Figure 20.1, modernity is a stream running off the lake of premodernity. It is a manufactured stream, incorporating the work of people from all levels of society, redefining ways of organising the world.

FIGURE 20.3 Modernity: symbol and gender



AKIRA

For an example of modernity, look at this *manga* (Japanese comic; 1982–90) and *anime* (Japanese animation) film (1988), both by Katsuhiro Otomo. One of the first theatrically released forms of *anime* to enjoy popularity in the West, *AKIRA* takes place in a massive dystopian version of Tokyo (Neo Tokyo) in 2019 and depicts a struggle between teenage psychic Tetsuo and leader of his biker gang, Kaneda, as Tetsuo tries to awaken the titular imprisoned psychic Akira, exposing lots of government secrets along the way. With its setting of a massive industrial city on the brink of collapse and exploration of themes around progress, cyberculture (a forerunner to digital culture) and often oppressive governmentality, *AKIRA* provides a unique overview of some of the central ideas of modernity.

Why is modernity important?

Modernity is still the dominant way of organising, seeing and thinking about the world:

- Almost by definition, modernity is always modern. It is an ongoing project because, as Habermas writes (1981: 9), it consists of ‘efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law ... for the rational organization of everyday life’. That is, because it is based around progress, modernity is always in the process of becoming.
- Modernity intends to replace premodernity. It sidelines premodern religion and natural authority in favour of reason and knowledge, and absolutes (in the sense they are empirically testable and verifiable) in place of abstractions. Modernity stresses the increasing importance of the secular realm, based on evidence, as opposed to the spiritual realm, based on faith.
- Modernity gave birth to popular culture and mass media. While premodern societies, with their forums, agoras and organised religions—their gathering together of people in one space—set up the metaphorical model or possibility for mass media to exist, it was modern society that ultimately gave birth to mass media and our contemporary understanding of popular

culture. This was because modernity gave birth to a corresponding rise in capitalism and entertainment. Technological development permitted advancements in production, circulation and consumption that allowed for the development of popular culture and the mass media as we know them today (Harvey 1989: 23).

- Modernity produced the modern idea of the institution, including the media institution. These include capitalism (commodity production and circulation), industrialism (the transformation of nature and use of inanimate sources of power), surveillance (the capacity of the state to monitor the activities of its citizens) and military power (legitimately monopolised by the state instead of by individual warlords).
- Modernity itself is frequently the subject of media texts. Ideas of modernity are constantly being debated, contested and supported in media texts. Examples include:
 - classic television series such as *Law & Order* (a celebration of the modern legal system, with police and lawyers working together), *ER* (a celebration of the modern hospital system), *CSI* (a celebration of forensic science), *The West Wing* (a celebration of the American political system) and *Star Trek* (a celebration of the perfectible modern future); in the *Star Trek* franchise, equality, rationality and progress are the benchmarks of the United Federation of Planets's future
 - the nightly news, which often hegemonically reinforces these notions of equality, rationality and progress, making these the benchmarks by which we judge other societies
 - entire genres, such as science fiction and the western, which are often based on modernity's central ideology of progress and the perfectible future.
- Similarly, a great number of texts look at crises in modernity (which we return to in greater detail below). These include texts like *Desperate Housewives*, which picks apart suburban life, and literary texts that have latterly been adapted for the screen such as Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, which feature the premodern–modern relationship between the city–urban setting and the country–rural–pastoral setting.

As modernity is an ongoing project, because it is always in the process of becoming, it means that modernity is always incomplete. That means that there's a gap in modernity. And that's where postmodernity comes in.

Postmodernity

Postmodernity is a form of thinking based around notions of difference and respect. It is not a form of social organisation; that is, it is a way of thinking that informs social organisation, not a complete form of social organisation in itself.

The crucial difference between modernity and postmodernity is that, while postmodernity still accepts the importance of the basic Enlightenment ideals—equality, freedom, justice and comfort—it also, according to McKee (2005: 17), 'accepts that different groups think and communicate differently about issues and we should respect that'.

Thus, postmodernity is against fixity, objectivity and, taken to the ultimate extent, reality (terms that we return to below), while encouraging oscillation, fragmentation, difference and respect for alternative perspectives, including the trivial, the commercial and the spectacular.

#Postmodernity: A type of Western thought that, while sharing the basic ideals of modernity, accepts that a wide variety of groups within a society have different perspectives on society and ways of being in that society, and that these differences should be respected and alternative viewpoints considered.

Postmodernity should be exciting, because it's about alternative ideas and letting them be heard. It is really a way of considering a wide variety of perspectives and encouraging debate—and isn't that what we want in our media and in the public sphere more generally?

Where did postmodernity come from?

The term 'postmodernity/ism' (note the slippage) first emerged in the 1870s, when it was used by British artist John Watkins Chapman as a term to describe the move away from accepted genres in art, literary criticism and architecture (Litowitz 1997: 41). Later, sociology and anthropology took up the term to discuss the ways cultural variety and economic indeterminacy are reflected in advanced industrial societies (Litowitz 1997: 42–5).

We can actually link postmodernity to a certain historical period, the Second World War, which was the ultimate crisis in modernity (at least before 11 September 2001).

Recalling Figure 20.1, postmodernity is a stream that has been running parallel with modernity for at least fifty years. Postmodernity is a period that John Hartley describes as being 'coterminous' with modernity itself (Hartley 1999: 39). Indeed, Lyotard himself (1987: 8–9) viewed postmodernity as the necessary corollary to modernity, not 'a new age [but rather] the rewriting of some features modernity had tried or pretended to gain'.

SECOND WORLD WAR

In the late 1930s, just before the beginning of the Second World War, then Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler, justified the Holocaust in terms of modernity; that is, he justified the extermination of millions of Jewish people as being rational and necessary for the future progress of Germany. To that end he had facilities purpose-built for genocide.

The most infamous of these was Auschwitz, the name loosely used to identify a compound that comprised three main Nazi concentration camps and forty-five to fifty sub-camps. The name was derived from the Germanised form of the nearby Polish town, situated about 60 kilometres southwest of Krakow. Beginning in 1940, Nazi Germany built several concentration camps and an extermination camp in the area, which at the time had been annexed by Nazi Germany. The camps were a major element in the perpetration of the Holocaust.

The total number of deaths at Auschwitz is still under debate, but most modern estimates are between one million and 1.5 million people.

It was the images of these camps that became the signifiers of the crisis in modernity. How could anyone believe in modernity—progress, equality and rationality—in the face of these atrocities? How could anyone believe in modernity, when modernity had been used to justify this genocide? And how could anyone believe in modernity's notion of a universal unity (a 'we'), when our fellow humans were capable of committing such acts for what they saw as a greater good?

After the Second World War

With the end of the Second World War came the end of the economic conditions, based on prosperity in the USA, that had persisted up until this time. Japan and Western Europe had to rebuild their own economies without relying on the USA for production facilities and technologies. This marked

a turn away from a unified economy. In place of the old economies came new, information-based technologies, the beginning of a new economy that was to increasingly blur the divide between producers and consumers.

FIRST SIGNS OF POSTMODERNITY

With a degree of hindsight, we can see that postmodernity has been part of modernity from the very beginning:

- In literature, novels such as *Tristram Shandy* (Laurence Sterne), dating from 1772, ignore all accepted rules of structure and plot.
- In journalism, as Hartley (1999: 40) suggests, we can now understand the press as containing postmodern elements from its inception, because it was ‘dedicated to the irrational and emotional as well as to reason and truth; to feminized, privatized, non-metropolitan knowledges as well as to public affairs; to questions of identity as well as power’.
- In science, the founders of modern science, Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, were essentially premodern heretics. Science, therefore, began as a mix of alchemy, magic and rational thought.
- In television, pioneers of the medium, such as Graham Kennedy and Bert Newton in Australia, frequently engaged in what we would now refer to as postmodern strategies, breaking the wall between performer and audience to talk directly to viewers, adopting a variety of points of view over the course of a show, referring to other programs and advertisers (intertextuality), making fun of television and their own sponsors, and drawing attention to camera operators (and thereby breaking down the form).

Postmodernity, therefore, can be conceived as Heller’s (1999: 4) ‘self-reflective consciousness of modernity itself ... a kind of modernity that knows itself in a Socratic way’; McGuigan’s (1999: 122) ‘reflexive modernity’; or Derrida’s (1982) ‘other’ to modernity. To use Heller’s (1999: 9) terms, modernity is simply subjected to a constant process of erosion by postmodernity. Hartley (1999: 40) refers to postmodernity as the ‘necessary twin to modernity, in conditions that were always there but only recently resolved into analytical coherence’. So postmodernity is something that’s always been there. It only took the atrocities of the Second World War to make us realise how important it could be.

When did postmodernity become a theoretical position?

Postmodernity’s broad use as a philosophical response, a way of thinking or reflecting on the world, didn’t really arrive until 1979 with the publication of Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (trans. 1984).

Here, Lyotard defined postmodernity as ‘an incredulity to metanarratives’ (1984: xxiv). As Lyotard’s definition forms the foundations of our understanding of postmodernity, let’s look at what Lyotard means here in a bit more detail.

What are metanarratives?

Metanarratives are the underpinnings of modernity, such as reason and unity. They are where discourses turn for legitimation. Think of metanarratives as really big narratives that structure discourses into stories in the same way that regular narratives structure texts into stories. Metanarratives include 'We need science for progress' and 'We need law for unity'.

As we saw in Chapter 11, metanarratives help to structure the many narratives that appear around celebrities' public lives (the texts they appear in) and their private lives (as 'revealed' in the interviews they give or via gossip sites/magazines) into one cohesive, or reasonably cohesive, whole. The metanarrative thus becomes a way of making sense of a celebrity. In a similar way, the metanarratives that Lyotard refers to help to structure and make sense of modern discourses, such as law and science.

Lyotard's (1984: xxiv) incredulity to metanarratives, therefore, encourages people to become sceptical about the established, to recognise the limits of modern thinking and to create something new: a new perspective, an alternative point of view or a challenge to the pre-existing modern discourses.

What is legitimacy?

Lyotard's (1984) main concern is with the altering status of science and technology, which he uses as a springboard for discussing the problem of **legitimacy**.

Lyotard (1984: xxvi) claims discourses seek to legitimate themselves by 'making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative [or metanarrative; he uses the two terms interchangeably], such as the dialectics of the Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth', be they classical (resorting to enlightened notions of truth) or modernist (communicative).

Lyotard saw discourses legitimating themselves with reference to what were essentially a larger set of myths built around wealth creation or emancipation. For more on discourses and myths, see Chapter 10. These mythic metanarratives continue to be used today.

The two key metanarratives Lyotard discussed were unity ('the speculative narrative') and reason ('the emancipatory narrative').

The metanarrative of unity is still frequently used. It refers to something done for the greater good, in the national interest or otherwise referring to the national spirit. This is precisely the myth used in relation to the USA's War against Terror, the introduction of the US *Patriot Act* or the arguments for relaxing cross-ownership laws in Australia.

The metanarrative of reason is grounded in the political visions of Immanuel Kant ('Reason will emancipate us from tyranny') and Karl Marx ('Science enables the proletariat to emancipate themselves') (Lyotard 1984: 37). It is the metanarrative that law appeals to in order to legitimate itself. It is also the myth used to justify legal responses to areas as diverse as cloning, animal experimentation, stem cell research and rape in marriage. It also legitimates most governmental and occasionally media responses to social (contentious) issues.

Lyotard claims that metanarratives have 'lost [their] credibility' (1984: 37) because they have not fulfilled their aims of unity and liberation (1987: 179–80). In the wake of the Second World War, you

legitimacy: The process at each discourse employs as it seeks to authorise its truth, fitness and superiority.

can see why the credibility of metanarratives were challenged. Hitler justified the Nazi regime as being modern and progressive, based on ideas of reason and unity twisted to his own ends; the fact that such atrocities could occur made many pause and reconsider how modern, how 'progressive' we truly were as a society and as a species.

The breakdown of metanarratives represents the shift from modernity to postmodernity. Lyotard (1984: xxvi) uses the term 'modern' to 'designate any science [science defined to include disciplines from physics to philosophy] that legitimates itself with reference to a meta[narrative] of this kind'. By contrast, 'postmodern' refers to '[discourses] that are legitimated by smaller, localised narratives' (Litowitz 1997: 111).

We can see the shift towards postmodern discourses in some of the previous chapters, where we examined such processes as the shift from the public sphere to public sphericules, from mass audiences to niche audiences and from journalism to citizen journalism. In each case, the larger metanarrative fragments to be replaced by 'smaller, localized narratives' (Litowitz 1997: 111). In this way postmodernity finds expression and form through Media 2.0, in that we can all be empowered users. However the possibility of Media 3.0 is more problematic. While it may represent the final shift towards the 'smaller, localised narratives' (Litowitz 1997: 111) that postmodernity celebrates, the personalised nature of Web 3.0 could also potentially prevent users from being exposed to those alternative points of view that postmodernity encourages us to explore and consider.

What are alternative knowledge structures?

What Lyotard is encouraging people to do here is to think of alternatives. He is arguing for people to consider multiple, parallel, competing, dissenting and often minority viewpoints when coming to a decision, rather than just following the majority, authorised or commonsense view. Lyotard wants people to question and so *The Postmodern Condition* (1984: 512) ends with an argument for dissent and multiplicity; a 'splintering', but not in a nihilistic sense. Lyotard's desire is to return to the people the power to think for themselves. Lyotard (1984: 37) not only encourages us to resist metanarratives but also presents the idea of **alternative knowledge structures**: 'In contemporary society and culture—postindustrial society, postmodern culture—the question of legitimation of knowledge is formulated in different terms. The [metanarrative] has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation' (Lyotard 1984).

#Alternative knowledge structures: Knowledges derived from the consideration of multiple, parallel, competing, dissenting and often minority viewpoints.

Modernity is also based on an idea of democratisation—the recognition that everyone has the capacity to contribute to society and therefore has the capacity to think for themselves. Lyotard (1984: 512) offers a different way of achieving this aim: 'What saves [the people] from [the force of metanarratives] is their knowledge that legitimation can only spring from their own linguistic practice and communicational interaction.'

Here, then, we see a powerful recognition of selfhood and individualism. Lyotard wants people to think for themselves, to take account of a variety of points of view and perspectives, rather than simply listening and doing what they are told.

Once again, these are ideas we can currently see being played out in the mediasphere, in the move from the passive to the active audience and from the consumer to the producer. This is the basis for interpellation, polysemy and pluralism (see Chapters 9 and 10).

Other definitions of postmodern

Some theorists in this area have, though not very convincingly, attempted to link these shifts in thinking to the aesthetics (the style and structure) of particular texts, especially television series such as *Miami Vice*, with its fragmentation of soundtrack, *Twin Peaks* and *Moonlighting*, with their blurring of genres, and *Ally McBeal*, with its splintering of narrative, broken by music, song and fantasy sequences.

While all of these series can be viewed as postmodern, they are postmodern in terms of their thinking, and in terms of the way they view the world, rather than merely the way they present that world aesthetically or the structural and stylistic considerations they employ. That is, they reflect postmodernity rather than postmodernism.

What is the aim of postmodernity?

What is central to all these forms of postmodernity is an interest in fragmentation, contingency, textuality, uncertainty and the indeterminacy of ideas, in breaking them down and remaking them as it does so. This approach overlaps with the tenets of poststructuralism, as discussed below.

Glee: postmodern television you can dance to

For an example of postmodernity, look at the television series *Glee*. Using a form that is intrinsically postmodern, the musical (which is postmodern because it disrupts the narrative with song and is based around spectacle and emotion), *Glee*'s postmodernity comes from its celebration of diversity in that it gives equal time to all of the very different viewpoints of its characters, and presents these viewpoints without judgment—even the increasingly bizarre antics of coach and *Glee* club nemesis Sue Sylvester (Jane Lynch).

WHAT IS POSTSTRUCTURALISM?

These aims of uncertainty and the indeterminacy of ideas are something that postmodernity has in common with the theorists often labelled as poststructuralists, frequently leading these theorists to also be labelled as postmodernists.

As the name implies, **poststructuralism** is essentially an intellectual outgrowth of structuralism. While it still clings to the basic structuralist methodology of breaking down structures—and the basic structuralist idea of signs being made up of signifiers and signifieds—poststructuralism rejects definitions that claim to be absolute or universal. It focuses less on the author and more on the reader as the producer of meaning. The author's intended meaning is, therefore, of secondary importance to the meaning that the reader perceives. Thus texts can have multiple meanings rather than one preferred reading. You can see a number of these poststructuralist ideas informing the ideas of textual analysis derived from Hartley (1999) and McKee (2003).

In contrast to structuralism, poststructuralism has never been a defined movement (with its own manifesto). Rather, it has been a label that has been selectively applied to those who criticised some aspects of structuralism, including prominent structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Jacques

#Poststructuralism:
A collection of
20th-century
philosophical responses
to structuralism that
are similar in that they
reject definitions and
philosophies that
claim to be absolute or
universal.

Lacan, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, along with theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Julia Kristeva.

In contrast to postmodernity, poststructuralism does not refer to a particular form of study; it just exists as a label for a form of structuralist critique. Therefore, it may be better to think of poststructuralism as a necessary development of structuralism that certainly informs the ideas of media, culture and textual analysis that we use today, and points towards some of the central concerns of postmodern thinking.

The aim of postmodernity, then, is to accentuate insight into the polysemic or splintered character of the social, and place legitimation back into the hands of the people, based on the assumption that you can move outside the boundaries and binaries that modernity imposes. Therefore, postmodernity:

- encourages you not only to think for yourself but also to think about others' perspectives
- encourages you to challenge conventional thinking
- repudiates certainties and boundaries to reveal the way power is manifested through institutions, language (according to Lyotard) and discourses (according to Foucault)
- aims to give voice to marginalised groups, and delights in the subsequent play of paradoxes, the oscillation between different points of view (according to Lyotard).

Are you still having trouble working out the difference between modernity and postmodernity? If so, try the *Scooby Doo* test.

THE *SCOOPY DOO* TEST

The different incarnations of the *Scooby Doo* franchise are a good illustration of modern and postmodern thinking in action.

The classic *Scooby Doo*—the 1960s Saturday morning cartoon series with limited animation and lots of recycled scenes of Scooby and the gang running around—has the following characteristics:

- It uses logic, reason or rational thought (such as Velma).
- Actions are justified as being for progress, profit or the greater good (represented by Old Man Whatever when he dresses up as a ghost, a monster or another troublemaker).
- An action appears completely sensible and makes perfect sense until you think about it from another perspective (the orthodox ending: 'And I would have got away with it too, if it wasn't for you pesky kids').

This is an example of modernity.

By contrast, the live-action *Scooby Doo* films from the 2000s, featuring a computer-generated Scooby and starring Sarah Michelle Gellar from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, have these characteristics:

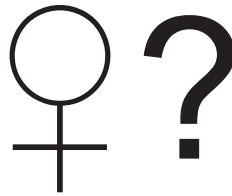
- It is illogical, emotional, unreasonable or irrational (such as Shaggy and Scooby confronted by a monster ... or a Scooby snack).
- An action is justified by a bizarre or out-there motivation, or a completely unexpected cultural or subcultural context (such as real ghosts or real monsters).
- It makes no sense until you think about it from another point of view (the unorthodox ending: 'It's breaking the walls between realities').

This is an example of postmodernity.

So here is a checklist of points to remember about postmodernity:

- Unlike premodernity and modernity, postmodernity is not a form of social organisation. Rather, it is a tool that encourages us to consider different ideas, different points of view, and different cultures and subcultures. It works with modernity, and sometimes, necessarily, against it.
- Postmodernity is based on the idea of difference and diversity. It celebrates difference by making us think about different ways of seeing, organising and thinking about the world.
- Postmodernity is expressed through ideas of hybridity, intertextuality and bricolage, which we define in more detail below.
- If postmodernity has one symbol, it is, as some students have suggested, the question mark (?). Also, postmodern texts tend to favour female gendering.

FIGURE 20.4 Postmodernity: symbol and gender



The X-Files

Long-running series *The X-Files* reverses the gendering we usually associate with postmodernity. The modern thinker, FBI agent and forensic scientist Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), is female, while the postmodern thinker, intuitive and emotional FBI agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny), is male.

POSTMODERNITY IN PRACTICE

So postmodernity is breaking down what is already out there and encouraging us to form a new perspective, either by putting the pieces back together in a different way or just finding another viewing position (from another text or another cultural perspective).

There are three terms we can use to describe what postmodernity is doing in practice, one of which you will already be familiar with from previous chapters. While some authors use these terms interchangeably, we prefer to think of them as different postmodern positions:

- **Bricolage** describes how different styles are juxtaposed, or clash, to create something new; for example:
 - In the realm of fashion, Doc Martens boots, a short black skirt, a black sweater and heavy dark eye make-up are brought together to create an Emo style.
 - In the realm of Hollywood musicals, Fred Astaire performs a dance routine that includes the items in the room around him (dancing with a hatstand, dancing up the wall).

Bricolage: From the French for 'striking together'; the intersection of a variety of styles to create something new.

With bricolage, you can still pick out the various components, such as the boots, the skirt and the make-up, that form the style, and therefore understand how they all work together.

- *Intertextuality* (see Chapter 9) is the way texts refer to, and help us make sense of, each other. Intertextuality is clearly postmodern in that it encourages us to look at one text in relation to another text. Therefore, it encourages us to think about the relationship between different ideas and look at ideas from different perspectives. Whereas you can still pick out the individual components involved in bricolage relatively easily, intertextuality can be a lot harder to detect. It requires audiences to have that level of cultural competency where we can either recognise the presence of a reference to an intertext or recognise when an intertext might help us make meaning in this instance.
- *Hybridity* (also see Chapter 19) relates to the mixing and sampling of different elements to create something new. Hybridity does not depend on juxtaposition because, unlike bricolage, the audience is rarely aware of the pieces that make up the whole until (or unless) they are pointed out. An example is the cyborg T-100 in *The Terminator*. We are unaware that this is a cyborg (part machine and part man) until it is injured and we can see the metal armature beneath its human skin. It is a hybrid—a mixture of different elements to create something new—but we are not aware of those different elements until they are revealed to us. As hybridity relies on different elements it also refers to something that is multi-origined, which has origins in robotics and humanity and brings them together, as in *The Terminator* cyborg from the franchise of the same name. If we expand these concepts a little further, we can think about elements as being cultural, not just physical, so media texts could be simultaneously Japanese and American, as demonstrated by some *anime*, businesses can be simultaneously commercial but environmentally focused, brought together in the concept of sustainable development, and teaching can be simultaneously educational and entertaining, brought together in the genre of ‘edutainment’, to which *Sesame Street* would belong.

Each of these terms can be used to discuss what postmodernity is doing in practice. For example, postmodernity challenges modernity by making us think in a wide variety of ways and take in different perspectives (intertextually). It encourages us to develop new styles and approaches in conjunction with what is already there through bricolage. It ultimately compels us to create something new through sampling or mixing different elements, by hybridity.

Postmodern industries

We can think of a number of media industries as being postmodern:

- *The fashion industry*: Fashion is continually reinventing itself, developing trends and blending styles. Think of the bricolage involved in bringing together boots, dresses, hats and jewellery.
- *The music industry*: Jazz and rap offer new ways of thinking about the world from the perspective of different cultures and subcultures, while sampling in dance and techno is an example of bricolage. Similarly, a film such as *Moulin Rouge* makes the postmodernity of music explicit: the lead characters blend different lyrics and songs from different times and styles to express their emotions.
- *The comic industry*: Structurally, comics are very postmodern as they splinter narrative into pictures and words. They therefore create an experience that oscillates between the viewpoint

of the writer and that of the artist. Industrially, too, the text itself oscillates between periodicals—newspaper strips and comic books—and books, trade paperback compilations and graphic novels. Textually, comics are postmodern, presenting a superhero figure who oscillates between two or more identities and contrasting ideas of law and justice.

Postmodern perspectives

Postmodern perspectives exist in the wider society too, and media frequently take up these perspectives as the basis for their own texts. Here are a few examples:

- history—arguments about invasion versus settlement
- journalism—the rise of literary journalism and blogging
- medicine—herbal treatments and alternative medicine
- law—alternative perspectives that have arisen from the Mabo decision (land rights in Australia), *Roe v Wade* (abortion in the USA) and *Brown v Board of Education* (segregation in the USA)
- religion—not only *The Da Vinci Code* but also *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Dune*
- sustainability—a bricolage of perspectives offered by premodern environmentalism and modern ecological science
- social movements—which manifest themselves as subcultures such as punk, from the Sex Pistols to Bart Simpson, and the gothic, from Edgar Allen Poe through to Lemony Snickett.

IS POSTMODERNITY CONSERVATIVE?

While postmodernity encourages us to adopt a variety of different viewpoints and take into account a number of alternative perspectives, here's a challenge that's worth considering: is postmodernity conservative?

In encouraging us to consider alternative viewpoints and perspectives, postmodernity also constructs one viewpoint as the mainstream or normal one. It therefore privileges this perspective, even as it encourages us to look beyond it.

The problem is that to move outside the boundaries, one has to be made aware of the boundaries that exist, even though this does serve to enshrine the white, male, heterosexual, Western perspective that is at the heart of modernity. Some could argue that, while postmodernity is trying to be very democratic, it still, ultimately, reinforces the dominance of the modern viewpoint.

Postmodern ideas

Postmodernity's questioning of some of the tenets of modernity have also resulted in a number of postmodern ideas that have been foregrounded in today's media, particularly in relation to news and popular media forms. Four of the most famous, and most controversial, are:

- Identity is mutable.
- There is no reality.

- Emotion is just as important as rationality.
 - Postmodernity has produced a new economy.
- We will now look at each of these and how they work in the context of the mediasphere.

Identity is mutable

Postmodernity fundamentally believes in a world without fixity, where everything is changeable. This carries over to identity as well—whether it's our physical, spiritual or cultural identity. For postmodernists there is no one truth, only multiple truths. This means that age, gender, nationality and sexual preference are all merely ways of being that can be challenged, deconstructed and changed through hybridity, intertextuality or bricolage.

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 19, new media clearly allow us to manipulate, reform and reconstruct every aspect of ourselves. They provide us with a virtual postmodern space in which we can become anything. Examples include:

- the cyborg and plastic surgery (the mutable body)
- the avatar (the mutable identity)
- the tourist compared with the refugee, the immigrant with the emigrant, and the terrorist with the patriot (the mutable cultural identity)
- celebrities in general—people who change their identities, sometimes in a very short time frame.

More recently, this has evolved into the idea of posthumanism: that humanity itself is limited and we need to move beyond humanity to truly develop. This is reflected by a growing interest in the posthuman in popular culture, for example, the perfect man in the *Twilight* series is not presented as human but rather a choice between a vampire (Edward Cullen) or a werewolf (Jacob Black). James Cameron's *Avatar* similarly presents the journey of its protagonist Jake Sully (Sam Worthington) from a (literally) crippled human to a free and environmentally aware posthuman Na'vi—a truly posthuman character in that it is a 3D motion-captured animation. Thus the posthuman represents the latest evolution of postmodernity's interest in mutable identities.

Those who consider postmodernity an abstract theory might well consider the possibilities of the new media environment in which millions of ideas are accessible and millions of ways of being are possible. New media may, necessarily, be the product of modern technology, but it provides us with a very postmodern vantage point on our culture and our society.

Philip K. Dick



Postmodern ideas of reality, authenticity, hyperreality and simulacra are well illustrated in the novels and short stories of Phillip K. Dick, many of which have been loosely adapted into Hollywood films, with varying degrees of success. See, for example, *Blade Runner*, based on Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, *Total Recall* or *A Scanner Darkly*. Dick's collective works, most of which are in print, add up to an omnibus of postmodern ideas and speculations.

There is no reality

As postmodernity believes in a virtually infinite range of perspectives and viewpoints that make up the world, it has questioned whether there can ultimately be any reality, and consequently any form of objectivity or truth. This is problematic, especially for scientists and journalists, but it doesn't have to be.

The idea of there being no reality most famously manifests itself in Jean Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality: nothing is real and all we perceive are the representations of reality (the simulacra) (Baudrillard 1994).

Note the connection with the ideas about media that we have been discussing in Part 5 of this book—media texts are representations, and many different representations make up the mediasphere, which is a part of the larger public sphere. We can examine the ways in which these representations present themselves and the significance of certain texts, but we would not say that one is a better representation of reality than another. They are all representations, but some merely seem more real; that is, they are more authentic representations of reality.

Think of this in response to the media coverage of the Gulf Wars, the original conflict in 1991 (where these ideas were first raised), the post-2001 War on Terror and the post-2003 war in Iraq. Are we being shown the reality of war? How are statistics used to insulate the viewer from the suffering? How do embedded journalists function as propaganda for the forces they are supposed to be reporting on?

The Matrix

Postmodern ideas of reality are explored at great length in the 1999 science fiction film *The Matrix* by the Wachowski siblings. The film's narrative revolves around computer hacker Thomas Anderson/Neo (Keanu Reeves) and his discovery that the entire world is a simulation called 'the Matrix' (similar to Baudrillard's notion of the simulacra) designed by machines to keep humans passive while they harvest them as living batteries. In a key meeting with resistance leader Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) Neo is offered a choice: 'Take the blue pill, the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill, you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes.'

Neo's journey over the course of this film should in many ways mirror your own journey through this textbook; just as he is empowered to understand how the Matrix functions (and can use it against its agents, like Agent Smith) so, too, should you be empowered to understand how media functions—and how to make it work for you. (Though hopefully without having to fight hordes of sentient machines that are trying to kill you.)

Constant questioning is a vital part of the scientist's and journalist's role, so anything that encourages that can't be all bad, can it? Alan Sokal was one who didn't agree and in a chapter that celebrates alternative points of view it seems more than appropriate to present an alternative point of view on the value of postmodernity itself.

A WORD OF DISSENT: ALAN SOKAL'S ASSAULT ON POSTMODERNITY

Not everyone is happy with the rise to prominence in academic circles of postmodernity and postmodernism. These theories and ways of thinking are either ignored or scorned by people from the so-called hard sciences, disciplines such as physics, chemistry and mathematics that are concerned with empirical data that represent the physical world. If scientists are even aware of the existence of postmodernism, and many are only vaguely so, talking about it is likely to provoke dismissive chuckles or looks of irritated bemusement. But when postmodernity does intrude into the scientific domain, some scientists hit back. Given that this is a chapter that encourages you to think about diversity, it seems only fitting to present the alternative point of view: that postmodernity has intellectual flaws that decrease its usefulness, at least in relation to science.

The most famous critic is Alan Sokal, a physicist with New York University. In 1996, his article 'Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity' appeared in the cultural studies journal *Social Text*. Regular consumers of postmodern theory will recognise the style of the article title instantly: it exactly matches the forms of words often used in this field, as indeed does the language of the whole piece. Immediately upon publication of his article, Sokal revealed it to be a hoax, and an international scandal erupted, which was covered in the mainstream media, including the front page of the *New York Times*. 'Transgressing the Boundaries' was abject nonsense, but it so pushed all the right postmodernist buttons that it was accepted by the editors of *Social Text*.

Sokal had become increasingly angry at the incursions into science by social theorists, whom he believed did not understand anything about physics and mathematics (in particular), but were simply posing and name-dropping (or equation-dropping). He was accused of being a right-wing reactionary, obsessed beyond reason with science, intellectually inflexible and explicitly anti-French. Much of the theory he included in his parody came from European thinkers, and particularly the French.

In a book, cowritten later with physicist Jean Bricmont, titled *Intellectual Impostures* (2003), Sokal rejected the criticisms, saying that he was forced to act to show up the inaccuracy of some of the things being said about science, though he did not reject humanities theories in toto. As a left-leaning individual, he also rejected the idea that he was pushing a right-wing agenda. He said that his aim was, 'quite simply, to denounce intellectual posturing and dishonesty' (2003: 14). His bogus paper cited many authorities, from great quantum theorists such as Niels Bohr to the current superstars of postmodernism. A huge range of genuine quotes was assembled to back a nonsensical argument that asserts an extreme form of relativism: no less than the idea that all physical reality is 'at bottom a social and linguistic construct' and that the pi of Euclid or Newton's gravity are simply products of the cultural origins of their theorists. To a physical scientist, this is demonstrably untrue, and yet to a postmodernist editor of a cultural studies journal it appeared completely reasonable.

Liberal employing the jargon of postmodernism, Sokal dumped on the usual suspects in postmodernity of white males and objective reality, and asserted a melange of trendy ideas that included a feminist interpretation of physical phenomena. To quote from one of his supporters, Gary

Kamiya, 'Sokal will no doubt be smeared as a reactionary for having the effrontery to place a whoopee cushion under the Supreme Throne of Post-Modernist Progressive Rectitude' (Kamiya 1996), and he certainly was.

His critique of postmodernism should be taken seriously as a genuine attempt to show some of the absurdities that have accumulated around parts of this theoretical landscape. *Intellectual Impostures* makes great reading, written as it is in clear, eloquent and often humorous prose. This, it has to be said, contrasts with the prose of the many postmodern theorists quoted in the book, who end up looking self-important, puffed up and rather ridiculous, just like the emperor in the famous fable about new clothes.

Liz Tynan

Emotion is just as important as rationality

Postmodernists call for a reappraisal of emotion in the face of modernity's insistence on rationality. Emotion can still be a powerful rhetorical tool: emotional arguments, for example, can be as persuasive, if not more so, than rational ones. Therefore, the privileging of emotion and public displays of emotion is encouraged by postmodernity. Think of the following:

- *Current affairs interviews*: How do emotional outbursts compare to rational arguments?
- *Talk shows*: How do public displays of emotion function? As therapy? As shared trauma? How do they make you feel as an audience member?
- *Narrative television*: Consider shows such as *Grey's Anatomy* or *Damages*. How important is emotion to these characters? Why must they hide their emotions to be better doctors or lawyers? Does this make them stronger or lesser people?
- *Media events that centre on tragedy*: What is the media's role in foregrounding emotion, in bringing us together at Princess Diana's funeral or in the wake of the 2001 attack on the Twin Towers in New York? Is the mediasphere a place for shared mourning? Is this therapeutic? And how does the media deal with trauma?

Postmodernity has produced a new economy

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, postmodernity has created a new economy through its splintering of unity, reappraisal of divisions between, for example, producer and consumer and increased focus on the importance of alternative knowledge structures and alternative sources of information. As noted earlier, this new economy emerged out of the aftermath of the Second World War, when countries had to rebuild without US support (and therefore US control). What this produced was a new economy, based on the commercialisation and capitalisation of information. This is enshrined in digital and social media, especially the connectivity and interactivity of such media. But essentially the new economy is a part of all media, because all media are in some way involved in the communication of information and/or entertainment.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Postmodernity has been represented as a very complex idea, endlessly applicable to a vast number of scenarios and situations.
- It has often been ridiculed and questioned, both for its relevance and for what it can offer discourses such as science and journalism.
- We argue that not only can postmodernity be a useful tool, but postmodernity is also increasingly important in an age of fundamentalism, embedded journalists and cross-media ownership.
- Postmodernity makes us question and critically reflect upon what is being represented to us:
 - It introduces new ideas into the public sphere.
 - It permits the recognition of a wide variety of cultures and subcultures.
 - It allows for the possibility of mutable identities.
 - It encourages an interactive and participatory audience.
 - It allows for greater pluralism in the public sphere.
 - It encourages us to question the modes of media manipulation: what is real, what is authentic, what is objective and what is credible.
- Postmodernity is a social context for thinking about media, but more importantly it is a tool through which we, as media producers and consumers, can understand what the relationship between media and society has been and what it can be in the future.

REVISION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1 What is postmodernity?
- 2 How has our thinking shifted from premodern to modern to postmodern thinking?
- 3 Do you think postmodernity is impliedly conservative? Why or why not?
- 4 Try to approach a social problem that has particular relevance to you through the lens of postmodernity. Did you find postmodern thinking useful? Did it help you change or deepen your perspective on the issue?
- 5 How important do you think postmodern thinking will be for Media 3.0?

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CASE STUDY 5

Free Speech and Journalism in the 21st Century

Nicola Goc

The thought that you can be imprisoned for doing your job is not something many of us need to consider on a daily basis. But in 2014 more than 200 journalists were imprisoned for practising journalism, including Australian journalist Peter Greste, and around the world journalists worked fearful of arrest, imprisonment and even death. This is not so surprising when you realise around 73 per cent of the world's people live in countries without a free press [Campbell, Martin & Fabos 2006: 544]. But freedom of speech is also under challenge in countries considered liberal and democratic, such as Australia.

In this case study we look at freedom of speech and journalism, particularly in the wake of the jailing of Australian journalist Peter Greste and his Al Jazeera colleagues in 2013, and the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* killings in France. In the Australian context, we look at the 2011 conviction of outspoken journalist and blogger Andrew Bolt for racial vilification under s. 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth).

There are various theories for understanding the way the media work and the role they play in politics that are useful in understanding the levels of free speech for journalists around the world. Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm's *Four Theories of the Press* (1956) established a typology for understanding the role of the press:

- 1 the authoritarian theory
- 2 the libertarian theory
- 3 the communist theory
- 4 the social responsibility theory.

More recently the work of Daniel Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) provides a contemporary understanding of the role

of the press in society. In this case study we examine the authoritarian, libertarian and social responsibility theories to better understand the notion of a free press and free speech.

Authoritarian model of media

Under the authoritarian media model, all forms of communications are under the control of the governing elite. While not under the direct control of the state, the mass media are censored by the government. No criticism of the government is permitted and reporters risk imprisonment for reports critical of government and the ruling elite. This form of heavily regulated journalism sets a state-based agenda as to what information will be disseminated to its citizens, stifling the ability for citizens to be better informed on information to make their own decisions on social and political issues.

China's media is an example of the authoritarian model. China is a market where private news media is growing rapidly at the same time as the government tightens its controls on the media. Media firms in China 'must dance skilfully between the party line and the bottom line' (Standage 2011: 6). In 2014, China was the world's leading jailer of journalists, with forty-four known journalists imprisoned for 'subverting state authority' (Committee to Protect Journalists 2015). In recent years, the rising numbers has been driven by the detention of journalists from ethnic minorities, mostly Tibetans and Uighurs. In 2014, some 160 journalists were also imprisoned in other countries including Myanmar (Burma), Thailand, Kuwait, Sudan, Malaysia and Mozambique on charges of anti-state reporting. In Thailand in July 2014, there was a clampdown



press, internet and social media freedoms. A new military executive barred any critical reporting or commentary about the ruling National Council for Peace and Order junta, and 11 journalists were sentenced to terms of imprisonment for 'anti-state' activities or 'defamation of the state'.

Government control on free speech and a free press in Thailand extends to commentary on the royal family under the country's *lèse majesté* law, Article 112 of the criminal code, which is designed to shield the monarchy from criticism. Convictions are punishable by three to fifteen years in prison, and in 2014 the editor of the website *Thai News*, Nut Rungwong, was convicted for defaming King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the country's 86-year-old monarch, and sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison.

In February 2015, Australian-born journalist Alan Morison returned to Thailand to face charges of defamation, which carried a possible seven-year jail sentence. Morison and his Thai national colleague, Chutima Sidasathian, were charged in 2014 with criminal defamation for a paragraph in a story they jointly published in *Phuketwan* in July 2013 about the alleged human trafficking, by rogue elements outside the Thai military, of Muslim Rohingya people who had fled persecution in Myanmar. The paragraph in question was excerpted from a Reuters special report on the alleged human trafficking activities. Chutima had previously been commissioned by Reuters to assist its reporters with their Rohingya-related coverage in Phuket. Morison said at the time of his return to Thailand that he was prepared to fight for freedom of the media in the country he had made his home: 'More than 100 journalists around the world are being persecuted in similar fashion using strong laws that shouldn't be used at all, so I think it's very important to go back and defend our case. We must face this in the interests of a free media in Thailand' (Morison 2015). Morison and Sidasathian were due to be tried in July 2015. As a class exercise it might be useful to research the outcome of the trial and the current status of Alan Morison and Chutima Sidasathian.

Egyptian free speech and the authoritarian model

In recent times, Australians have become more aware of the authoritarian model of the media with the arrest and jailing in Egypt in 2013 of Australian-born Al Jazeera journalist, Peter Greste, and his two colleagues, Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed. It's clear that conditions for the press have worsened in Egypt under President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, who took power after the forceful overthrow of his predecessor Mohammed Morsi in July 2013.

At least six journalists were killed after al-Sisi took power, nearly all covering protests, and in 2014 Egypt was the sixth leading jailer of journalists in the world, with twelve journalists imprisoned (Committee to Protect Journalists 2015). In 2015, President Al-Sisi told the German newspaper *Spiegel Online*: 'Human rights should not be reduced to freedom of expression' and that 'Western media have been manipulated by the Muslim Brotherhood and are unable to separate analysis of Egypt from their own cultural context' (Bednarz & Brinkaumer 2015). The once-flourishing independent Egyptian media, weakened by four years of disruption, terrorism concerns and a struggling economy, has led to public and government disenchantment with the media; and it was in this repressive environment that Greste and his Al Jazeera colleagues were accused of reporting news that was 'damaging to national security'.

In January 2014, Peter Greste, Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed were charged with conspiring with the Muslim Brotherhood, falsifying news and publishing news that had a negative impact on overseas perceptions of Egypt. The journalists were found guilty and Greste and Fahmy were sentenced to seven years jail, while Baher Mohamed received a ten-year sentence. There was an international outcry at the length of the sentences, the nature of the trial and the lack of applicable evidence. After a prolonged campaign by journalists and media organisations around the world, along with the Greste family and the Australian Government, the Egyptian Court of Cassation in early 2015



announced a retrial for Greste and his colleagues, but they were denied bail. Egyptian law allows for the deportation of foreigners, but stipulates that they must face prison or trial in their home country. A month later, on 1 February, Greste was deported to Australia, and two weeks later Mohamed Fadel Fahmy and Baher Mohamed were released from jail on bail pending retrial. While it is unlikely Greste will ever face trial in Australia, his colleagues face the prospect of lengthy jail sentences in Egypt.

Free speech and the libertarian media model

The libertarian model is based on the Western model of democracy and is a direct reaction to the authoritarian system. It is founded on the notion of a free press under the frame of the Fourth Estate and is embedded with democratic values. A robust critique of the behaviour of government, the authorities and influential bureaucrats and businesspeople is encouraged. In theory, under the libertarian model journalism should be regulated with no restrictions and journalists should be free to report without fear or favour. Capitalism is a key element to this system, which encourages the free 'marketplace of ideas'. Journalism is aligned with the values of laissez faire economics in the ownership and regulation of the media. Rupert Murdoch's News Ltd follows the model of libertarian theory and has become one of the largest media companies in the world, although in 2013, as the newspaper industry continued to decline, the company began restructuring and divesting its publishing operations. It is still one of the world's most diversified media and information companies. Murdoch's News Ltd seeks profits under capitalism and is a proponent of deregulation of government influence and control on media. News Ltd owns more than 140 Australian newspapers.

The US media comes closest to this libertarian model with freedom of the press protected by the First Amendment to the US Constitution. The First Amendment is generally understood as prohibiting government from interfering with the printing or publication of information or opinions. In reality, this model in its purest form does not exist—as

evidenced by the WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden cases in recent times. In Australia, the model of press freedom borrows from the libertarian philosophy, but only to an extent. For example, in Australia the introduction in 2005 of sedition laws reduced the right to free speech and impacted on journalism, as did the 1994 introduction of s. 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* [Cth].

Andrew Bolt, s. 18C and the limits of free speech in the Australian media

In 2009, News Ltd's Andrew Bolt, one of Australia's highest profile conservative journalists and bloggers, wrote two blogs in which he described some Aboriginal people as 'the new tribe of white blacks', claiming they sought professional advantage from the colour of their skin. Nine Aborigines who were described in Bolt's column as 'fair-skinned Aborigines' took offence at the columns, which led to the 2011 class action against Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times company (a subsidiary of News Ltd).

S. 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* [Cth] states that a person cannot say anything that is 'reasonably likely ... to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people' because of their 'race, colour or national or ethnic origin'. In introducing the provision in 1994, the then Attorney General Michael Lavarch said it would be a 'safety net for racial harmony'.

In defending his columns, Bolt argued that even if he had breached s. 18C, the columns were 'fair comment' in a matter of public interest—the so-called free speech exemption. Judge Mordecai Bromberg, however, found that Bolt had contravened s. 18C and that his comments were regarded as being representative of a 'eugenic' approach to Aboriginal identity. Justice Bromberg ruled that Bolt could not rely on the 'fair comment' defence because he had not acted reasonably and in good faith as required. Nothing prevented someone discussing the issue of racial identity, but Bolt's defence failed because of the manner in which he did so, with 'errors of fact, distortions of the truth and inflammatory and provocative language' (Alcorn 2011).



RACIAL DISCRIMINATION ACT 1975—SECT 18C

Offensive behaviour because of race, colour or national or ethnic origin

(1) *It is unlawful for a person to do an act, otherwise than in private, if:*

(a) *the act is reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or a group of people; and*

(b) *the act is done because of the race, colour or national or ethnic origin of the other person or of some or all of the people in the group.*

(2) *For the purposes of subsection (1), an act is taken not to be done in private if it:*

(a) *causes words, sounds, images or writing to be communicated to the public; or*

(b) *is done in a public place; or*

(c) *is done in the sight or hearing of people who are in a public place.*

(3) *In this section: ‘public place’ includes any place to which the public have access as of right or by invitation, whether express or implied and whether or not a charge is made for admission to the place.*

Judge Bromberg concluded:

[F]rom the perspective of fair-skinned Aboriginal people, the messages [the imputations] conveyed by the newspaper articles which Mr Bolt wrote, included that:

– There are fair-skinned people in Australia with essentially European ancestry but with some Aboriginal descent, of which the individuals identified in the articles are examples, who are not genuinely Aboriginal persons but who,

motivated by career opportunities available to Aboriginal people or by political activism, have chosen to falsely identify as Aboriginal; and

– Fair skin colour indicates a person who is not sufficiently Aboriginal to be genuinely identifying as an Aboriginal person.

I am satisfied that fair-skinned Aboriginal people (or some of them) were reasonably likely, in all the circumstances, to have been offended, insulted, humiliated or intimidated by the imputations conveyed by the newspaper articles.

Source: Eatock v Bolt [2012] FCA 1103
www.fedcourt.gov.au/publications/judgments/judgment-summaries/

One concerning aspect of this case in the global digital media environment is that while Justice Bromberg, at the time of his 2011 judgment, made orders which prohibited the republication of the articles, in March 2015 a simple Google search using the phrase ‘Andrew Bolt columns’ brings up one of the offending columns from 21 August 2009: ‘Column—The new tribe of white blacks’ as the second result out of 365,000 results. Earlier searches in 2014 brought up the same placement. Whatever our views on free speech and s. 18C, there are clear ethical (if not legal) issues for Bolt and the Herald and Weekly Times around the ongoing accessibility of this material, which has been found to contravene s. 18C. While there is not room in this case study to discuss this aspect further, it is worthy of class discussion.

The guilty verdict in the Bolt case has produced some strange bedfellows across the political spectrum and has seen journalists and publishers from both ends of the political spectrum criticise the ruling. Fairfax journalist Gay Alcorn reflects one common view: ‘Some people (including me) who disagree with Bolt’s views on most things, nonetheless believe that section 18C of the Act that makes it unlawful to “offend, insult,



humiliate or intimidate” a person or group on racial grounds is too broad in a democracy where robust debate means that even the most unpalatable opinions should be contested, not outlawed’ (Alcorn 2011). The guilty verdict prompted the Australian Government to propose changes to the Act but against a groundswell of opposition no changes were made.

Following the 2015 *Charlie Hebdo* killings in France, Liberal Senator Cory Bernardi re-floated the idea of 18C’s repeal and the Prime Minister, Tony Abbott, restated his preference for this to take place, though he quashed any suggestion that it was part of the government’s immediate agenda.

Citizen journalism, free speech and the social responsibility media model

The social responsibility model originated from Western philosophy in response to the rise of the oligopoly structure of media ownership; that is, where a handful of companies control the industry. News Ltd, for example, owns a considerable slice of the Australian media and most of the news produced and consumed in the world today is manufactured by the major media corporations such as News Ltd, Time Warner, Viacom General Electric/ NBC Universal and Disney (although a non-news company, Disney now owns and operate American news outlets ABC and ABC News).

The social responsibility media model pushes back from the capitalist-driven model of a free market economy, where journalism is more about the business model and the profit margin and less about quality of the journalism. If an inclusive, informative and trustworthy news media is the grease of democracy, then in a world where superficial news is squeezing out hard news, the social responsibility model is said to offer consumers and producers a better option. Social responsibility theory highlights the relationship between press freedom and journalists’ responsibilities to society. Whereas in a liberal free-market approach only those with the economic means

can contribute to journalism, the social responsibility model argues that media should strive to include the greatest spectrum of views and sources, such as user-generated content, crowdsourcing and citizen journalists.

Citizen journalism refers to private individuals working as journalists but doing so outside of the traditional news organisations and generally for no wages. Citizen journalism in the digital age can take many forms, from well-produced podcasts, to blogs on newsworthy events and topics, and editorial comments on Twitter, video clips on YouTube and online stories. Most citizen journalism today is published online. The advent of the World Wide Web had allowed ordinary citizens without large resources the ability to transmit information globally. This power was once reserved for only the very largest media corporations and news agencies. However, the ease of production does not come without its risks, as this book’s case study on journalism, sexism and misogyny attests. For citizen journalists and whistle-blowers who take on many tasks previously performed by professional journalists, the risk is significant as they are targeted by hostile governments and individuals much more aggressively than their professional colleagues would ever be. An example is Avijit Roy, an American blogger of Bangladeshi origin, who was the founder of the Mukto-Mona (Free-mind) blog that championed liberal secular writing in Bangladesh. Having received several death threats from Islamist militants, he was hacked to death in Dhaka in early 2015.

Libertarian media model, free speech and *Charlie Hebdo*

When cartoonists and journalists from the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, plus four other people, were killed by two gunmen in January 2015, the attack brought the issue of free speech back into the international public spotlight. In Australia, the attack has led, perhaps inevitably, to a renewed effort to repeal or modify s. 18C of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.



Charlie Hebdo is a stridently non-conformist, far left-wing, secular, atheist weekly magazine well known for its publication of irreverent cartoons depicting political and religious figures. It was the target in 2011 of a terrorist attack presumed to be in response to the publication of cartoons about the Prophet Muhammad by cartoonist Renald 'Luz' Luzier. After the 2015 attacks, through the *Je suis Charlie* campaign, *Charlie Hebdo* became a symbol for free speech. The 'Je suis Charlie' hashtag in January–February 2015 was used on social media more than ten million times around the world.

But *Je suis Charlie* is a symbol Renald Luzier is uncomfortable with. The cartoonist, who survived the 2015 attack because he was away from the office on the day of the killings, spoke at the time of the challenge of navigating between the roles of agitator and white knight in defending free speech: 'All at once, everybody was saying "I am Charlie" and for ourselves becoming a symbol is difficult. Because Charlie fought against symbols. How do we burst the bubble of this symbol? The symbol we've become?' (Luzier 2015).

Luzier was offended to see Saudi Arabia officials marching through the streets of Paris with world leaders in support of *Charlie Hebdo* and free speech: 'What an irony to see that behind us was a representative from Saudi Arabia where the blogger Badawi is in jail for ten years, where they lash him every week. All of a sudden, Saudi Arabia says, "I'm Charlie", but it is not'. Luzier said he was disappointed when publications like the *New York Times* refused to publish the latest *Charlie Hebdo* cover of the Prophet Muhammad, which he drew (Luzier 2015).

Luzier believes his role as a cartoonist is to do what he does best: 'poke fun at our strange world. Humour doesn't kill anyone.... I think that most Muslims don't care about *Charlie Hebdo*. Those who claim all Muslims are offended take Muslims for imbeciles, I think. We don't take Muslims for imbeciles.... We can't be prisoners of the sense of humour of others. I just want the drawings to be responsible again. But it's going to be difficult. We must draw in order to describe this strange world' (Luzier 2015).

Award-winning French freelance journalist and academic, Nabila Ramdani, has a different point of view on *Charlie Hebdo's* representation of the Prophet Muhammad. While Ramdani acknowledges the 'sacred point' that 'none of this in any way justifies violence, let alone the horrific slaughter' (Ramdani 2015), she argues that the vast majority of French Algerians, and indeed Muslims across the world, were shocked and appalled by the murders. But she strongly disagrees with Luzier's claim that Muslims don't take offence, or don't care about *Charlie Hebdo*. She points to the prevalence of religious hate speech in modern France and the divisions this is causing in French society as creating an environment in which inflammatory journalism disrupts social cohesion. Writing in the *Guardian* after the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, Ramdani (2015) said:

There is no doubt that *Charlie Hebdo's* notorious cartoons satirising the Prophet Muhammad saddened and angered Muslims in equal measure. Other images and articles were also vindictive, including some about the other major monotheistic religions, Christianity and Judaism, but it was Islam that the Hebdo team always really had in its sights. Its murdered editor, Stephane Charbonnier, regularly expressed his disdain for this religion.

In 2015, the US-based Pew Research Centre undertook a survey into the *Charlie Hebdo* attack and free speech and found that 60 per cent of respondents (from a cohort of 1003 adults) said that it was okay for *Charlie Hebdo* to have published cartoons that depict the Prophet Muhammad, citing freedom of speech and freedom of the press (Pew Research Centre 2015). But nearly three in ten respondents (28 per cent) did not support the magazine's decision to publish the material. About half non-whites said it was not okay. Those who said it was not okay to publish cited 'should respect religious beliefs' (35 per cent), 'offensive/politically incorrect/not



appropriate' (31 per cent) and 'provoked anger/violence/terrorism' (7 per cent) as the reasons for their view.

US academic Dale Jacquette argues that to whatever extent we limit freedom of the media, to that exact same extent we also limit the optimisation of truth available to the members of a free society (Jacquette 2007: 136). However, he agrees that in certain instances censorship may be imposed for the sake of satisfying a morally greater obligation—for the greater good (Jacquette 2007: 136):

The question then is always how, under such circumstances, the regulation and limitation of free inquiry by a free press is morally valuable. A free press and the free flow of information it helps to sustain is one of the most important ways in which a free society safeguards its freedoms. It is not the only way, however, and there are circumstances under which the publication of certain kinds of information is more of a threat than a benefit to the maintenances of a society's freedom.

The right to free expression does not come free of personal responsibility. We all need to act responsibly when delivering messages; and journalists, who have the power

of the mass media and are the purveyors of information upon which free societies run, have a greater responsibility to act ethically. Perhaps we would all do well to be guided by a rather pithy principle found, appropriately enough, on a magnet in the Newseum in Washington DC: 'Freedom of speech is not a licence to be stupid'.

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TOOLS 5

Digital and Social Media and Journalism Practice

Nicola Goc

Introduction

We are halfway through the second decade of the 21st century and there is no longer any doubt that there has been a seismic shift in journalism practice through the arrival of digital and social media technologies. We are living in a world where millions of news sources on billions of pages are available on the internet and consumers are overwhelmed with this massive whirlpool of information. Audiences are hungrily seeking out news and opinion they can trust to provide them with an interpretation of the data, albeit often one that fits with their worldview.

The web is opening up new opportunities for journalists to report, interpret and share their opinions on the news of the day. The online world has seen journalism become a 24/7 global activity. Journalists are no longer restricted to traditional office hours to contact sources, obtain information, and file and update stories; instead they are expected to post and update stories round the clock, and audiences now expect to have a dialogue with journalists on micro-blogging sites such as Twitter and social network sites such as Facebook, Pinterest and Tumblr.

Today, all professional journalists are expected to have the skills to produce news stories across multiple platforms, at the very least in print and online. Digital media such as blogs, **vlogs**, **audioblogs**, wikis and **IM** have all opened up new ways for journalists to research, produce and communicate with their audience, but they have also put new demands on journalists.

But while the way journalists do their job is changing, the fundamentals remain the same and as pertinent as ever. Journalists still need to gather information and create news stories that are factual, accurate, informative, fair and engaging. They need to do this in shorter time frames than in the past and, most importantly, they need to be able to think on the run; to make good ethical decisions and produce powerful journalism.

Professional and citizen journalists alike have been quick to utilise digital and social media tools—particularly blogs, mobile phones and social networking sites—to create news. Perhaps the most important thing about practising journalism in the digital media environment is that unidimensional journalism (reporter writes story) is insufficient in the digital age. Digital and social media journalism aspires to produce multidimensional journalism—multimedia journalism.

Facebook

Gone are the days when journalists could hide behind the anonymity of a newspaper masthead. Journalists today need to have a profile, and social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn provide a way of profiling their work, and as a way of cultivating and communicating with sources and their audience. Creating such an online identity is increasingly important for journalists.

log: Short for video logging; a form of logging in which the medium is video.

audioblog: A blog that includes audio clips in MP3, AAC or other audio format with brief text descriptions of their content. If the audioblog is made available in a syndication format such as RSS, it is a podcast.

IM: Short for instant messaging; the exchange of text messages in real time between two or more people logged into a particular IM service.

Facebook managers have recognised these shifts in consumption behaviour, and are now making partnerships with, and providing resources for, news organisations and publishers to more effectively use the platform. As Purcell and colleagues (2010) note: ‘Most noticeably, you can now see what your Facebook friends have “liked” or “recommended” on sites like CNN or *Washington Post*. *Washington Post*, for example, has prominently integrated Facebook’s social plug-ins into its site for a social news experience’. Social networking sites have become important platforms for the delivery of personalised news in the 21st century.

Twitter

As an instant way to break news, Twitter has changed the journalistic landscape. In Twitter’s early days, sceptics scoffed at the idea that anything useful could be conveyed within the 140-character limit, but by 2013 Twitter had become the ‘news’ newswire of the 21st century, with more than 200 million users of Twitter **tweeting** more than 4000 million messages per day (Ritholtz 2013).

For journalists today, Twitter provides a direct dialogue with their readers, viewers and peers in a way that was never possible during the reign of the newspaper, or even during the early days of web journalism. It is part of the shift to conversational, collaborative journalism, and live tweeting of important newsworthy events for many journalists is now part of their daily routine.

Reporters also turn to Twitter as a virtual notebook—using it to collect and provide real-time updates on breaking news events. Others use it as a way to point readers to their work or to share their perspective on a particular topic. Regardless of how you use Twitter, following a few key best practices can help you boost your follower growth and increase the engagement on your Tweets. Our data shows that applying these simple methods will improve your performance on Twitter (Twitter Media 2015).

Twitter is the most effective micro-blogging tool for journalists for:

- breaking news
- crowdsourcing
- following other news stories and newsworthy people
- searching for sources
- gathering community quotes
- saving time
- gathering story ideas
- continuing the conversation
- responding to criticism and questions.

According to Mark Luckie, the Creative Content Manager for Journalism & News at Twitter, one of the best ways to increase Twitter engagement is to tweet regularly about the subjects you cover. Research by the micro-blogging site shows that for people who post a concentrated number of tweets in a short time span, follower growth is 50 per cent more than average (1.5x). Live tweeting or posting updates about a news event related to your story is a way to grow followers and increase interaction (Luckie 2012).

#Tweet: Originally referred to a posting on Twitter; today is both a noun and a verb.

hashtags

Tweets with hashtags (the # symbol, immediately followed by the subject or keyword related to the tweet) can increase engagement almost 100 per cent (2x) for individuals and 50 per cent (1.5x) for brands (Luckie 2012). Journalists and news publishers use hashtags to organise conversations, gather feedback, and to identify and engage with Twitter users discussing a particular topic.

Luckie also suggests journalists share what they are reading with their Twitter followers by including a URL. He says news accounts receive 100 per cent more (2x) active engagement on a high-performing tweet when a URL is included. To increase the engagement on your account and tweets, he suggests journalists 'mix it up a bit: when individuals share URLs to non-company sources, they experience a bump in follows' (Luckie 2012).

Using the retweet button to curate content for your followers can lead to a higher engagement with your audience, according to Luckie: 'Individuals with above expected follower growth send 200 per cent more retweets (3X) compared to individuals with below expected follower growth'. He gives the example of the *Washington Post's* Karen Tumulty (@ktumulty) who has a high rate of Twitter engagement because she shares interesting content she has come across.

The advantage of Twitter is that journalists can quickly provide ongoing succinct updates in real time. While each single tweet is restricted to 140 characters, it is important to note that the individual tweet doesn't sit in isolation in a user's Twitter feed—it is surrounded by the context of other tweets, creating a far more comprehensive discourse. News organisations are beginning to think of their Twitter feeds as a separate product—a place not only to push their journalism but also to do journalism that is specifically adapted to the Twitter format.

Twitter and court reporting

Court and parliamentary reporters now use Twitter to post breaking news and update stories, though the use of mobile phones and computers inside courts was something unheard of until very recently. In 2010, the Lord Chief Justice for England and Wales allowed journalists to report some court proceedings using Twitter. Until this time, the use of mobile phones in British (and Australian) courts was forbidden. The Lord Chief Justice said the use of an unobtrusive, hand-held, virtually silent piece of modern equipment for the purposes of real-time reporting of proceedings to the outside world as they unfold in court is unlikely to interfere with the proper administration of justice. He argued that the most obvious purpose of permitting the use of live, text-based communications would be to enable the media to produce fair and accurate reports of the proceedings. With this ruling, at least in England and Wales, journalists can now use their mobile phones and computers to text and email.

This ruling on the use of Twitter in court proceedings was prompted after journalists used Twitter at the bail hearing of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to provide updates. This decision is likely to lead to courts throughout the Commonwealth to allow the use of digital media in courtrooms and the creation of a set of guidelines for journalists on the use of social media and internet-enabled laptops in courts of law.

Australian journalism academic Julie Posetti found herself grappling with the legal ramifications of Twitter in late 2010 when she tweeted updates from the Journalist Education Association Conference in Sydney. During a session at which former *Australian* journalist Asa Wahlquist was talking about her experiences of writing for the *Australian*, Posetti paraphrased several of Wahlquist's remarks.

Her tweets included: ‘Wahlquist: “Chris Mitchell goes down the Eco-Fascist line” on #climate-change’ and ‘Wahlquist: “In the lead-up to the election the Ed in Chief was increasingly telling me what to write.” It was prescriptive’ (Hooton 2011: 13). When the editor in chief of the *Australian* saw the tweets, he contacted Wahlquist, who claimed she had been quoted inaccurately and taken out of context. According to Hooton, an audiotape ‘appeared to confirm the accuracy of Posetti’s reported tweets’ (2011: 12). Nevertheless, Mitchell said he would sue Posetti for defamation. Posetti maintained that her tweets were a fair report of a matter of public interest: ‘I was tweeting summaries of matters of public interest being discussed in a public forum’ (Hooton 2011: 12). Mitchell did not go ahead with a lawsuit when a tape recording of the conference proceedings became available that supported Posetti’s recollection of events. Journalist Jonathan Holmes pointed out that the case was significant because ‘It’s not every day that the editor of a newspaper threatens to sue a journalist simply for reporting a matter of public interest. To put it mildly, it’s a somewhat counter-intuitive action for a newspaperman to take,’ he said (Holmes 2010).

Guardian journalist David Banks argues that in terms of court reporting using Twitter, it is important that journalists have legal guidelines to make sure they retain their defences against libel and contempt. The challenge for journalists is the brevity of tweets: ‘Court reporters have defences against charges of contempt of court and an action for libel as long as their reports are fair and accurate. Can they fairly sum up what might be complex legal points in 140 characters?’ (Banks 2010). Banks says the use of links, or **Tweetlonger**, might address this, but ‘there is a danger of cherry-picking the juiciest moments when tweeting court and possibly producing a report which is not a fair account of proceedings’ (Banks 2010).

Twitter is also used for gathering information from sources. According to *Washington Post* senior reporter Paul Farhi (2009: 28), Twitter is a ‘living, breathing tip sheet for facts, new sources and story ideas’. He says it can provide ‘instantaneous access to hard-to-reach newsmakers, given that there’s no PR person standing between a reporter and a tweet to a government official or corporate executive. It can also be a blunt instrument for crowdsourcing’ (Farhi 2009: 28). According to Dan Gillmor, veteran news media blogger and Arizona State University journalism professor, ‘Journalists should view Twitter as a “collective intelligence system: that provides early warnings about trends, people and news”’ (cited in Farhi 2009: 29).

Crowdsourcing

Crowdsourcing—that is, obtaining data, information or ideas from a group of people—is a growing aspect of citizen journalism and a good example of the ideals of social responsibility media. Crowdsourcing feeds into the idea of open-source journalism, which involves the attempt to produce news from an egalitarian and participatory manner where communication is often horizontal and there are no barriers to entry. This system of collaborative information-gathering allows, in a very short period of time, the gathering of vast quantities of information that can be used to produce informative journalism. Importantly, it also enables consumers to participate in the newsgathering process and as such has been lauded as a positive step forward in the global digital age of news production. One example of effective crowdsourcing was the large number of striking pictures of the demonstrations in Kiev in 2014. Dedicated live streams, using citizen news sites such as UKrstream.tv, Spilno.tv and hromadske.tv, provided 24/7 news images and content at the same time as the Ukrainian government

#Tweetlonger: Also known as **Twitlonger**; a simple service that allows the posting of messages of more than 140 characters on Twitter. ‘Long Reply’ is a similar service.

#Crowdsource: To obtain information or input into a particular task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the internet.

was cracking down on traditional media, shutting down the country's opposition-friendly Channel 5, leaving the internet as the only source for information for many Ukrainians.

New platforms for practising journalism

Stringr

Stringr is a platform for licensing freelance videos anywhere in the world within 60 minutes by sourcing footage from professionals and citizens. Launched in 2014, its aim is not only to supply news organisations with content within an hour but also to pay freelancers immediately, according to CEO and co-founder of Stringr, Lindsay Stewart. In the past, freelancers who sent their content to news organisations usually had to wait weeks (if not months) to be paid, but Stringr's immediate payment model assists freelance and citizen journalists to forge a viable career from journalism.

Stringr is not only for breaking news: it also sources 'evergreen' content for media organisations to browse and use. At present the organisation is restricted to the East Coast of America, but plans are being made to take the company global.

JuxtaposeJS

Another new initiative has come from the Knight Lab at North Western University in the USA. JuxtaposeJS is a new tool that helps journalists tell stories by comparing two picture frames (including photos and gifs), making it a storytelling tool ideal for highlighting the then/now stories that explain slow changes or growth over time, or before/after stories that show the impact of a sudden dramatic event such as a natural disaster, war or protest. JuxtaposeJS is free, easy to use and open source, making it easily available to citizen journalists and professional journalists.

Mobile reporting tools

Apps useful for journalists include the following:

- *Buffer* allows journalists using an iPhone to share their copy to Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and App.net from one place and at optimal times. Journalists can save time by adding up to five tweets or posts to their 'buffer' for automatic posting at the best times throughout the day.
- *Buzzfeed* is a 'listicle' site. It started out in 2006 publishing articles that were lists focusing on fun and entertainment. It has now expanded into long-form journalism and reportage, but maintains a focus on celebrity and infotainment. BuzzFeed's meme-baiting attracts millions of views each day.
- *Dropbox* allows journalists to view files on the go, download files for offline viewing, sync photos and videos, and share links to their files in their personal dropbox. Journalists use this to transfer mobile text, photos and video back to the newsroom.
- *DropVox* allows journalists to archive mobile media while in the field. They can record audio in the field and upload directly to a DropVox account to be accessed by the newsroom or to be edited later.
- *Evernote* is a note-taking app that allows journalists to save and store text, photos, audio files and weblinks in the cloud for later access across any device. Journalists can use it to take notes, write stories and captions, and submit them for editing.
- *Instagram* is a photo-sharing app that allows smartphone photographers to be creative. Media companies can use Instagram to display news photographs or to add to *Storify*.

app: short for application; computer program designed to run on smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices.

- *SkypeRecorder* uses Skype (the ubiquitous system for making calls over the internet) to allow journalists to record their conversations (of course with the knowledge of the subject) directly to a mobile device, such as a phone, iPad or tablet.
- *Storify* is a social network where people upload eyewitness accounts of on-the-spot events as they unfold. It is useful for journalists to find first-hand reports anywhere in the world, and to connect and collaborate with sources. It also allows citizen journalists to produce and publish stories.
- *Taptu* is an aggregator app of news content and information from social networks. Like other news aggregator apps, it also ‘learns’ what content people access and further tweaks their stream. The app also allows users to sync content between all their devices, as well as share on social networks such as Facebook, Google, LinkedIn and Twitter.

The RSS

An acronym most commonly expanded as ‘Really Simple Syndication’, **RSS** enables frequently updated content—such as news headlines, news feeds, news stories, excerpts from discussion forums and corporate information—to be delivered to a computer or mobile device as soon as it is published. A partial feed includes a headline, a short summary of the content and a link to the place where the content resides. Journalists use RSS feeds to deliver news content; it is also useful for syndicating news. When syndicating content, journalists should use an eye-catching title—just like in the analogue days when subeditors used headlines in newspapers and magazines to attract attention. In RSS feeds, the lead paragraph of a story is replaced by an interesting description of the full content to encourage readers to click through and read the full article.

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Hyperlinks

The hyperlink is one of the definitive features of digital and social media. It allows people to structure and nest information into documents differently. Nesting is a way of organising information according to subjects, while paying secondary attention to context. In the place of context, nesting (most commonly seen in text or image hyper-linking) is a format that fosters organisation in a way in which elements interact with one another instead of simply following a straight order. No longer does the entire content of a story have to be contained in one linear narrative. Links give journalists a dynamic way to tell complex stories concisely, as extensive background paragraphs are no longer needed to provide clarity and context to a story. The hyperlink has broken down the notion of fixed text, making all journalism, including text, dynamic. Importantly, the hyperlink also provides transparency and credibility. Journalistic best practice states that every statement in a news story needs to be attributed, and through hyperlinks journalists can now supply links to all online resources used in writing their story, including raw data, graphs, video, transcripts and official documents, to provide readers with a clear understanding of the facts of an issue.

Hyperlinks also fit well with the new collaborative model of journalism where citizens and sources contribute content to news. A complex story no longer needs to be told by a single organisation: ‘Links are an irresistible glue that can coordinate journalistic production across newsrooms and bloggers alike’ (Stray 2010).

Digital and social media and the ABC

Managing director of the ABC, Mark Scott, says the 2010 federal election changed the way political journalists go about their craft. He argues that the single most salient aspect of the media coverage of the election was the public's voice being heard through Twitter and on blogs. He adds that the election offered a significant opportunity to employ new tools and old tools to present the news to the public. He acknowledges the 24/7 news cycle and the pressures on journalists today, but believes that the campaign offered complexity and concentration through online coverage that was never before available, certainly not at the ABC.

Scott is excited about the possibilities of the internet for news journalism. He says the ABC was able to offer more policy and political insights through the ABC website, *The Drum*, than it had ever been able to offer before:

One of the joys of online is that you have space. Space to run details on every candidate in every seat on Antony Green's election pages. Pendulums and calculators and demographic analysis. Detailed policy briefings. ... All there for anyone who is interested... (Scott 2010)

Scott acknowledges that traditional news organisations need to take heed of what their audiences are saying. He also acknowledges **Grog's Gamut's** contribution: 'Twitter and the mass of amateur blogs contain many smart people who for some bizarre reason enjoy writing about policy ... the media should not scorn these people, they should feed off them for ideas and research' He believes the future of news journalism is a closer interaction with audiences. However, he also recognises that this new interaction can be challenging for journalists.

Scott says that what is significant to media organisations like the ABC today is that they need to accept that they now operate in a shared space. That space is now shared by professionals and amateurs, and Scott says smart media organisations will embrace the energy and insight of the non-professionals and use it to ultimately strengthen their offering. The advent of new media tools, he says, means that many more people can practise journalism in ways never imagined before. He says that there are now two newsrooms: the traditional one, 'and the virtual one that has emerged as one of the most significant features of digital life.' (Scott 2010)

Ethics in the digital environment

There are many ethical issues surrounding the social media shift (some of these are discussed in Case Study 3, which focuses on the misogyny and sexism journalists face in the online world). There are significant challenges for journalists in the new interactive online environment, where they are expected to interact with an audience that does not have the same obligations to adhere to a code of practice.

In this new world of digital interaction, the ethical and professional practice of journalism, with its declared emphasis on objectivity and facts, is even more vital, such is the alleged poor quality and unreliable nature of much of the amateur blogosphere (Carlson 2007, cited in O'Sullivan & Heinonen 2008).

Australian political journalist and commentator, Annabel Crabb, has spoken candidly about the challenges—and opportunities—for journalists in the digital media environment. Crabb is indeed

Grog's Gamut: A blog maintained by Australian public servant Greg Nicho, who maintained anonymity until Australian journalist James Spillane 'outed' him during the 2010 federal election.

a model of the new journalist of the digital age. She works across several platforms in old and new media, and regularly provides comment on ABC national and local radio. She is a regular guest on the ABC's *Insiders* program and also provides analysis and comment on the ABC 24-hour news channel, ABC News 24. She is the first to admit she is not a tech head, even confessing to once baking an Apple Powerbook in the oven.

What significant difference has Crabb found working in the online environment? The first things she noticed were the immediacy of reader response and the vigour. In the past, readers incensed or inspired by something a journalist had written or produced did not have the ability to respond instantly. A letter to the editor was the only recourse for a reader. Today, those gatekeepers are absent and readers can respond directly to the journalist and, as Crabb has found, they often do in imtemperate language: 'You get the kitchen table response. Straight away. Right in the kisser. "Make a comment!" suggests the tag at the end of the story. And ABC *Online* readers do. Oh yes, my word, they do.' (Crabb 2010)

While Crabb has found being openly ridiculed by people that haven't read her piece properly is one of the challenges of 21st-century interactive journalism, she admits that what is worse is the readers who have read her article, and 'think you are a loser, and whose argument is so compelling that by the end of it you feel quite obliged to agree' (Crabb 2010).

Both of these experiences are, as she says, part of the new media landscape. 'Audiences are splintered, but demanding. They want new news, and if something complicated has happened, they want instant analysis.' (Crabb 2010). These days audiences are eager to express their views on the event that has occurred as well as the style and quality of the report.

News, Crabb says, is no longer about newspapers, journalists or radio bulletins just delivering news. It's actually 'the beginning of something ... you can't much control after pressing "Send"'. (Crabb 2010). This sense of control being lost is what Crabb calls 'a hallmark of the new media' (Crabb 2010).

Conclusion

The internet gives journalists a reach never imagined in the age of traditional print-based and nation-based media, and for some high-profile journalists their individual sphere of influence is now global. Quite simply the World Wide Web has transformed journalism. New technological developments are happening at a rapid pace in the digital space and many are now predicting the 'post-mobile' world in which tools such as Google Glass will deliver another new way of practising journalism. The influence of digital and social media and the internet has drastically changed the media landscape and while that change has been detrimental to traditional media it has opened up new models for practising journalism. While journalists have always had to adapt to new technologies, today's journalist is faced more than ever with new ways of delivering news and information. To be successful in the digital world, today's journalist has to embrace new technologies across multiple platforms, but a journalist's most important tool is not the technology they use to produce news stories, but rather the ability to be a critical thinker. This is indeed an exciting time to be working in the news media.

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- The Drum Unleashed: www.abc.net.au/unleashed

CONCLUSION: THE VIEW FROM HERE

Media is always in the state of becoming: upgrading, innovating, reconfiguring to meet societal changes, and developing along with the latest technological advancements. Media 2.0 has this built into its very design because it involves the audience as producers rather than consumers, and in so doing gives us all the potential to be journalists—catching images, posting stories and writing blogs. And there, in this focus on the user, we find both the promise and challenges of Media 3.0. A semantic web operating just for us. An archive of our interests and concerns. Media produced for and often by us. The private and the public alike replaced by a network of discrete individuals. More than any other reason, this is why we have named this the Media 3.0 edition because media is always becoming something more, something new.

In a similar way, a book such as this can't really conclude; at least not in the sense of coming to a final word on the subject of media and journalism. We are dealing with dynamic professions that are on the frontline of global societal change. Anything can happen in the future—and probably will.

What we have done is offer you new approaches to understanding what is out there. We have provided you with theoretical tools to understand how to make the best of the current Media 2.0 environment and prepare for the possibility of Media 3.0, whether you want to be a producer, a consumer or a prosumer. We have provided you with an active, practical and transferable skill set referred to as journalism that can be used across a number of media platforms and contexts. We have offered a range of contemporary and historical case studies and contexts that show these tools and skills in action. We have offered new models for media industries by comparing television to a zoo and interrogating what it means for film to be an art form, and offered new insights into the many forms convergence can take, and analysed the hierarchy of celebrity and the utility of postmodernity. In this edition, we have included reflection and revision questions for you to help consolidate your learning. For those of you who want more, you can find more new approaches to assessments, tutorial content and media in our online supplement accompanying this book.

What we can also offer you is the view from here: a view looking back over where media and journalism have come from and a view looking forward, with some helpful ways for you to navigate through whatever the future holds. One of our goals with this book is to arm you with the theoretical knowledge and practical tools for a career in media. We want you to go forward with confidence and a determination to make sense of the media world you will inhabit, whether as a journalist, screenwriter, director, public relations professional, games designer, actor, blogger, social media manager or some other public figure.

At the conclusion of Ridley Scott's seminal science fiction film, *Blade Runner* (1982), Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) has a final confrontation with his nemesis, the replicant (android) Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer) high atop a dilapidated building. Instead of fighting him, Batty, his life drawing to an end, calmly sits down and delivers a monologue that has since become famous for film scholars and screenwriters:

I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears, in rain ...

We do not know what C-beams are, or the nature of the attack ships off Orion, or where the Tannhauser gate is located. It is not necessary to understand the loss that Batty (and Deckard) are feeling, or the awesome sense of history and progress that has brought them to this point.

The history of media and journalism are similarly marked by such moments, some of which we have shared with you in this book: memories of productions, papers and events that may seem as far removed from you now as C-beams and attack ships. Many more are archived on YouTube or fan sites or referred to (often incorrectly) on Wikipedia. Each, in its own way, is important to being able to understand where these disciplines come from ... and where they are going.

This book is littered with contemporary examples of media change—from using YouTube to change military culture to the Edward Snowden revelations, and from the transcendent YouTube celebrity of Justin Bieber to the distribution practices of *Game of Thrones*; each of these examples reminds us of the enormous technological changes and pressures driving media and journalism ever forward. Our book has taken you from the beginnings of print media, when single sheets of news were handed out on street corners, to a world of global media and technological revolution, which has taken human communication to levels that were unimaginable just a few decades ago. Every day the possibilities for what media can do and the definition of what it means to be a journalist continually blur and change.

Here, through an examination of what it is to be a journalist or a media practitioner—and what that means for the world, both past and present—we have brought together an overview of media and journalism in all of their forms, with the aim of providing a better understanding of the role and impact media and journalism have had and continue to have on society. We have sought to explore the relationships between journalism and the broader media, and, in doing so, have tried to expose the often complex and dynamic interconnections between the two. We have, for example, seen how news journalism influences novels and screenplays. Think of the many films that feature journalists as their lead characters and draw upon the news media for their plots, from *Superman*, *Smallville* and *Batman vs Superman* to the representations of real-life characters such as Truman Capote (*Capote* and *Infamous*) and Edward G. Murrow (*Good Night, and Good Luck*). We have also examined how the world of entertainment is represented through news journalism in front-page or leading news stories about actors and celebrities (think of Lady Gaga, Kim Kardashian or Angelina Jolie).

In this book we have also tried to draw together theory and practice in a way that aims to inform all of you, from the budding Walkley Award-winning journalist, to the latest public relations guru, to the documentary filmmaker or film producer, to those who wish to analyse and interpret what it is that journalists and those working in the media do (and how this has an impact on society in the 21st century), to the future media analysts, media advisers to government or big business, or public policy developers, researchers and teachers.

We have seen how the Fourth Estate has evolved from debates in the forums and agoras of the ancient world, through to the creation of *corantos*, then newspapers, and much later, radio and television, to the advent in the late 20th century of the World Wide Web and the attendant unlimited possibilities for communication, production and distribution. Now we communicate with each other, receive news and information and are entertained—and entertain ourselves—interactively while we are in the office or at the beach through tablets, laptops, iPods and mobile phones. We play games, watch movies and television shows, and listen to music on these devices while we go about our daily lives. We access the latest news online, whenever we want, wherever we are, through our computers or on our phones via news-text messages, video-streamed news bulletins and the latest apps. We are J-bloggers and citizen journalists, commentators, bloggers, spruikers, prosumers and entertainers, providing the global world with news and information and entertainment live on blogs, YouTube, Twitter and Facebook. Instant global communication is at the fingertips of any of us with access to technology. Social media connect us to people we may not have wanted to see again after high school, help rescue workers find survivors in the wake of natural disasters, and act as a call to arms for activists in pursuit of democracy in the Middle East. We are all media practitioners.

It is a great time to be studying media and journalism, but what does it mean in practice?

In this exciting, transforming, technological revolution, the role of journalists and journalism is changing. Predicting the demise of the printed newspaper is no longer a radical view put forward by chronic pessimists and hysterical Cassandras. In fact, newspapers probably will disappear at some point, and may well do so in our lifetimes. Is this a problem? News was disseminated before newspapers as we know them existed, and you can be sure it will afterwards too. Exactly how journalists fit is cause for considerable debate and discussion in the profession. Former editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Amanda Wilson, said in a 2012 report:

The faltering economics of the newsgathering industry has left journalism in a climate of fear. A cloud of doom has descended on those who care about quality, independent journalism as they watch the means of funding

it—revenue from advertising—move from the steady decline of recent years into freefall. The bottom of the cliff from which it has taken this dive is not visible at this point. (Wilson 2012)

One of the major questions for the future of journalism is a purely economic one: how to get money from readers for news websites. As *Guardian* media columnist and commentator Roy Greenslade (2008) notes:

In the future there will be advertising. It won't be enough to fund huge staffs as there are now, but we'll have a core of professional journalists. We can fund them and then, in company—in participation with journalists, bloggers, user-generated content, however you want to describe that, amateur journalists ... will form a different kind of approach to journalism.

The flow-on effects of this economic change are twofold. First, news corporations will increasingly rely on amateur journalists, from citizen journalists to J-bloggers. We began to see this on a large scale during the run of natural disasters at the beginning of 2011, from the flooding in Queensland to the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, where images captured on mobile phones, tweets and blogs provided the most confronting, illuminating and often informative representations of what was occurring. This trend has strengthened, and now nearly all major human-induced or natural disasters and dramas are brought to us through the myriad lenses of free-ranging media: the shaky iPhones and the endless chattering of Twitter.

Second, there are already indications that the most popular news stories online are soft rather than hard news, moving the mediasphere ever closer to the dissemination of entertainment and identity-based stories; that is, celebrity culture rather than information. The antics of the Kardashians, the arrival of the royal babies and the ever-changing fashions and actions of Lady Gaga all receive disproportionate attention on online sites. In the face of these changes, it becomes imperative that journalists understand and become aware of the broader mediasphere and their changing place within it. For while the future of journalism may remain unknown, what is still certain is that wherever individuals acknowledge the importance of free speech, and are committed to respecting the truth and the public's right to information, journalism will survive.

The mediasphere continues to expand to the point that it is increasingly hard to communicate without it. There has long been debate (modern, postmodern and the like) over the relationship of media and journalism to reality, and it is a debate that we have rehearsed in these very pages. But it seems that the world is becoming more and more mediated. As the mediasphere continues to consume much of our public sphere and our waking time, and now that we all have access to the tools of production, our lives are themselves tending to turn into media products. We can score our days with our iPods. We can build our own documentaries with webcams. We can publish and stream opinion pieces online. Screenwriters and game designers are now encouraged to think of narratives in terms of worlds rather than stories, and with many of us colonising these new worlds, the mediasphere is increasingly becoming the new frontier. Facebook statuses and tweets increasingly make us the stars of our own lives and, when the rest of the world starts to notice (cue: Justin Bieber), we can actually move up that hierarchy of celebrity.

But when commercial media informs so much of what we see and hear, even the most important of events can be impacted and changed; in 2015 supermarket chain Woolworths (among others) was accused of exploiting Anzac Day for commercial purposes with its 'Fresh in Our Memories' campaign. These ads, together with T-shirts, licensed goods and Victoria Bitter's 'Raise a Glass' campaign have led some commentators to disparagingly refer to the day as 'Brandzac Day' in recognition of Anzac Day's commercialisation and increased use as a marketing tool. WikiLeaks was similarly criticised for publishing 30,287 documents and 173,132 emails stemming from an earlier cyber-attack on Sony Studios. While founder Julian Assange defended the move as revealing 'the inner workings of an influential multinational company', many commentators saw the move as motivated more by garnering attention and headlines than any legitimate desire to inform the public.

Back in 2010–11 two films, both contenders for Best Picture at the 2011 Academy Awards, highlighted the increasing importance of mediation as part of communication practice. The first, *The King's Speech* (2010, directed by Tom Hooper), explores the challenges that the stammering newly crowned King of England, George VI (Colin Firth), faces when forced to use the then relatively new medium of radio in 1939 to make an important speech to his subjects following Britain's declaration of war with Germany. Thanks to the services of an unorthodox Australian speech therapist, Lionel Logue (Geoffrey Rush), the king successfully makes the speech, and many more during the course of the conflict. But the film often laments the need for mediation, with King George V (Michael Gambon) noting that:

In the past all a King had to do was look respectable in uniform and not fall off his horse. Now we must invade people's homes and ingratiate ourselves with them. This family is reduced to those lowest, basest of all creatures, we've become actors!

More particularly, the dangers of mediation are highlighted when the British royal family is watching a newsreel of Adolf Hitler speaking at a rally in Germany. King George VI admits he can't understand what Hitler is saying but 'he seems to be saying it rather well'. Of course, it was Hitler's consummate skill in using media that assisted him in his rise to power.

The second film, *The Social Network* (2010, directed by David Fincher), explores the founding of Facebook (in 2003) and the subsequent lawsuits served on Mark Zuckerberg (Jesse Eisenberg) by his co-founders. Even more than *The King's Speech*, the film uses a real historical event to provide an examination of how mediation has increasingly become our only form of communication, with Zuckerberg continually depicted as being unable to communicate—with his girlfriend, his friends and his colleagues—without his computer. At the end of the film, he is alone—forced to settle the lawsuits because he will be unsympathetic to a jury, and trying to reconnect with the girlfriend who dumped him at the beginning of the film by sending her a friend request on Facebook and refreshing the page over and over again.

Both films feature lonely and isolated protagonists who, despite their ages being over 70 years apart, are both increasingly reliant on media to communicate. In so doing they highlight the problems with that reliance, as the mediasphere continues to grow. King George VI complains: 'If I'm King, where's my power? Can I form a government? Can I levy a tax, declare a war? No! And yet I am the seat of all authority. Why? Because the nation believes that when I speak, I speak for them. But I can't speak.' Here he may be referring to his stammer, but in part he is also referring to a need to understand how to speak through media—how to use media to communicate. He is speaking to the inexorable rise of mediation that will ultimately lead to the development of social networking sites.

It seems a given that such mediation is always in the service of communication. Indeed, we define media in this book as being the mechanisms of communication. But could there be a time when rather than simply enabling us to communicate, media will actually communicate for themselves? On 10 February 2011, *Time* reported on the **technological**

singularity theory in an article written by Lev Grossman, provocatively entitled '2045: The Year Man Becomes Immortal'. While it may sound more like the futures envisioned in *The Matrix*, *Battlestar Galactica* or *Terminator* franchises, the technological singularity theory postulates a time when, based on the accelerating pace of change and the exponential growth in the power of computers, technology will surpass humanity, thereby creating superhuman intelligence. While opinions differ on when (or even if) this will occur, such an idea carries profound implications for media for, as we have seen throughout this book and in the filmic examples above, the evolution of media is inextricably linked to the evolution of technology. If the technological singularity, or even something approximating it, were to occur, Media 3.0 provides us with only a hint of what is to come. The lines between media, technology and humanity would blur to the point that they would become indistinguishable. The reality is that mediation is already

#Technological singularity: The point at which technology surpasses humanity to create superhuman intelligence; appropriated from astrophysics by science fiction novelist Vernor Vinge in the 1980s and applied to L.J. Good's idea of an 'intelligence explosion' (1965).

an indelible part of the human experience; rightly or wrongly we can no longer function as individuals or as a society without media. As Sean Parker (Justin Timberlake) puts it in *The Social Network*: 'We lived on farms, then we lived in cities, and now we're going to live on the internet!' This will only become more pronounced in the future.

With so much of our lives being lived online or on a screen, there has been a commensurate loss of the private sphere; indeed, wearable media has made such a space virtually (pun intended) non-existent. By way of example, well in excess of 23 exabytes of information is recorded and uploaded to the web weekly and Google street view is in the process of photographing the entire planet. Even Facebook's new privacy settings make profile information and photos public by default. But while privacy advocates have long raised concerns about this perceived loss of privacy, online advocates trumpet this as an evolution in connectivity, borne out by Google's assistance in finding survivors in the wake of natural disasters and the aforementioned use of social networking to organise mass democratic change movements in, say, the Middle East. In an era when the possibilities of celebrity and fame are more attractive than ever, and every life is considered worthy of online dissemination, privacy itself appears to be in danger of becoming outdated; a value of the past. Celebrity has taught audiences that self-transformation is possible. In a similar way the audiences of the future may transform themselves—that is, change their names and create new identities—to escape the online sins of their past.

A major support structure for navigating current and future changes throughout the mediasphere remains an ability to grasp the most basic element of media and journalism: language. It is useful to be aware of a distinction between the creative evolution of the language and the destructive erosion of the language; no matter what violence is being done to our dominant means of communication, there will still be a place for efficient and careful communication in the information-based professions. A fluke of evolution has given humans the capacity for language. Whatever whistles and clicks and grunts other creatures use to communicate with each other, miraculous as these are in themselves, only humans form words, sentences and paragraphs, and then form these into media such as books, journal articles, newspaper columns and (with more dubious benefits) three-word political slogans, fast-food menus and small-print-dense iPhone contracts.

As far back as the 1940s, George Orwell was warning us about the risks of allowing language to degrade to the point where abstract concepts, including ideas of political dissent, become difficult or even impossible to express. While the process of systematic and deliberate corruption of the language that created what Orwell called Newspeak in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is not exactly what we have to fear now, we do need to ensure that denizens of the public sphere are not, by either neglect or agency, faced with difficulty in manoeuvring a language that has lost its capacity for fine nuance and has therefore turned to slush. There is an argument that some forms of new media have slush-creating potential, a destructive erosion rather than a creative evolution, but we do not need to accept this process as inevitable.

It is an old-fashioned notion these days, but many professional writers remain interested in standards. Standards matter. As that great exponent of clear English writing, Clive James, once wrote, 'If you lose the language, you lose everything'. This statement has a rhetorical flourish, but there is a lot of truth in it. We would even suggest that it goes to the heart of who we are as people. Our capacity for language is one of the defining characteristics of humanness; it is one of the reasons we should not just see ourselves simply as naked apes, essentially the same as our simian relatives. We are different; we have language. We have the capacity, not always fully or well realised, for ethics and morals. We can make choices about how to behave, rather than blindly follow a set of base instincts. We can speculate, verbally, about the past and the future, and consider the concept of death. We can see this reflected in our greatest pieces of media, in the films that move us, the television series that make us think, the music that defines a moment of our lives, and the newspaper article that reveals a new facet of the world.

This capacity for language has also given us belief systems, another human characteristic, and probably an inevitable consequence of the abstract thinking essential for language. Language is the primary way by which we project from our

internal, subjective world into the wider external world. That bridge between the inner and outer worlds is tenuous, and can create any number of potential barriers and pitfalls. Imprecise language use is one of them. Abusing semantics by, for example, detaching meaning from words is downright dangerous, and in these dangerous times we need more than ever to be clear about what we mean.

A professional communicator can build a long and fulfilling career upon a fine appreciation for language and a facility for its use. Language is a precision instrument that you can wield to your advantage. Think about your words. In many of the communication professions these are the main things you are being paid for. Whatever may come in the future, this fact is unlikely to change.

In the 2014 Marvel Studios/Disney film *Guardians of the Galaxy*, Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) is kidnapped by aliens in 1988. Twenty years later, his most prized possessions are media from that era: his Awesome Mix Volume 1 tape, his *Alf* stickers and his troll doll; even his spaceship (the *Milano*) is named after his favourite actress from the era, Alyssa Milano. So often we forget that media are in effect time machines, capable of compressing great time and distance as mechanisms of communication. Similarly, for so many of us like Quill, media are time machines connecting us to other eras and the most important moments of our lives. The newspaper articles we read, the images we see and the music we hear inform both the most important and most intimate memories of our lives.

For all of these reasons, you should be aware that whatever work you do in the mediasphere matters. Any form of media (from the comic strip to the film, and the newspaper column to the advertisement) has the capacity to carry meaning and therefore make change. When the news media were rallying behind US President George W. Bush in the opening days of the war on Iraq, it was left to popular media—to films as disparate as *Batman Begins* and *War of the Worlds*, television series such as *Boston Legal* and *Battlestar Galactica*, and comics such as *The Ultimates*—to step into the breach and comment on the erosion of civil liberties, the justness of war and the power of fear. More recently, films such as *The Imitation Game* have commented on the persecution of homosexuals, *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* has interrogated the balance between security and freedom, and a television series such as *Gogglebox* has revealed how differently audiences can read television. Sometimes you may just want to make the bloodiest, scariest zombie film with a few mates and a bottle of tomato sauce—and that's okay too. But always remember the capacity for media to make critical comment and to enact change. After all, even Romero's *Night of the Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead* offered insightful and satirical commentaries on racism and consumerism, while *The Walking Dead* continues to explore gender roles and social relations today.

Thanks to Media 2.0 we are all part of this same mediasphere; part of a conversation that has been running since we first learnt to communicate with one another on a plain or in a cave somewhere in Africa. Media 3.0 offers us the possibility of taking charge of that conversation, for good or for ill, blurring not just the line between producer and consumer, but also between user and media. So go on. Stop reading and get out there. Make your own moments. Add to the conversation. We wish you well.

GLOSSARY

10BA Cycle of Films

A group of Australian films produced in the 1980s, assisted by the 10BA tax scheme, introduced in 1981, that provided generous tax relief for film investors. The films spanned a number of genres (horror, exploitation and action) and were particularly commercial, stylistically imitative of Hollywood and more focused on the US film market than providing any quintessential depictions of 'Australianness'.

'A' movie

In a double bill at a cinema, the feature attraction, made with high budgets and well-known stars.

ABC

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (the Australian Broadcasting Commission from 1932 until 1983); Australia's public broadcaster, which is funded by the federal government rather than advertising.

Absolute privilege

Complete immunity from the laws of defamation based on the principle of 'open justice', which allows the courts and the parliaments to function in a fearlessly independent manner.

Actuality

Location sound, which may sometimes be an interview with talent, and in some newsrooms is used interchangeably with grab.

Address

The way the text hails us, calls us over or otherwise demands our attention.

Addressee

The audience implied by being addressed.

Addresser

The position that is actively attracting us to the text.

Agenda setting

The way the media determine what will be communicated as news to influence what audiences think about and discuss.

Agora

An open space in a town where people gather, especially a marketplace in ancient Greece.

Alternative knowledge structures

Knowledges derived from the consideration of multiple, parallel, competing, dissenting and often minority viewpoints.

Analogue technology

The transmission and storage of electronic information via continuous waves, especially in recordings and radio signals, and along telephone wires.

Analysis

Examination in detail of the elements of something in order to determine how the whole functions.

Anchorage

The tying down of an image text (through a caption) or a written text

(through a headline) to a certain meaning.

Anecdote

A vignette or brief word picture that describes an incident; often used to illustrate the main theme of a journalistic feature.

Anime and manga

Styles of Japanese animation and comic books, respectively, covering a wide variety of genres, and often appealing equally to adults and children; *manga* often provides the basis for *anime* productions.

Antenna

The device used to send or receive electromagnetic signals; a crucial part of radio broadcasting.

Apostrophe

A punctuation mark used to show contraction or possession.

App

Short for application; a computer program designed to run on smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices.

Audience identification

Encouraging audiences to adopt the viewpoint and share in the emotions (especially hopes and fears) of a character in the text.

Audience networks

Where audience members themselves access media texts through links with other audience members, replacing the broadcast one-to-many media networks.

Audioblog

A blog that includes audio clips in MP3, AAC or other audio format with brief text descriptions of their content. If the audioblog is made available in a syndication format such as RSS, it is a podcast.

Auteur theory

From the French *auteur*, meaning author; at its most basic, it is the theory that a film has an 'author', just as a book does, and the author of a film is its director. In its more complex variations, it is a theoretical tool that posits that while it is impossible for there to be a unitary author of a film, given the number of people who contribute to its making, it is still possible to analyse individuals' ability to leave some form of distinctive style or signature on what is essentially an industrial product.

Authenticity

The way in which media try to represent ideas or situations as near as possible to how they occur in reality—the principal aim of journalism.

Avatar

An online construct that allows a member of a virtual community to transcend age, gender, race or geography, and make a fluid new identity.

'B' movie

In a double bill at a cinema, the supporting or second feature, made with low budgets and lesser-known stars.

Backgrounder

Material provided in addition to a media release, consisting of more

detailed information than the release and providing journalists with a range of new angles.

Bankability

The ability of a celebrity to make a guaranteed profit for his or her employer; a bankable Hollywood star can make a film succeed on the strength of his or her name alone.

Berliner

A compact newspaper measuring 470mm × 315mm, which has become a popular newspaper format in recent years.

Bill of rights

Legislation, through parliament or a clause in a Constitution, that guarantees citizens a legal right to certain freedoms.

Bingeing

The watching of a succession of television episodes in one sitting.

Blockbuster film

A very costly film that a studio hopes will make a profit as a result of the enormous amounts of money spent on publicity and wide distribution.

Blog

An online journal comprising links and postings; both a noun and a verb with various inflections, such as 'blogger' and 'blogging'. Its origin is 'weblog', a regular online journal.

Brand

A name, person, sign, character, colour, font, slogan, catch-phrase or any combination of these that operates as the signifier of a particular product, service or business. A legally protected brand is called a trademark.

A brand is a perfect example of metonymy and an aspiration for many celebrities.

Brand journalism

A form of public relations in which companies use the tools of digital publishing and social media to speak directly to consumers, often by employing successful former journalists and running inhouse newsrooms.

Bricolage

From the French for 'striking together'; the intersection of a variety of styles to create something new.

Broadband

Currently, the most advanced form of internet access, offering high-speed access and wide bandwidth; transmitted via telephone, cable and wireless services, which has almost entirely replaced dial-up.

Broadcast

The transmission of knowledge (ideas and information) in the widest possible circles. It can operate as a verb: to broadcast; a noun: a television broadcast; and as an adjective: a broadcast program.

Broadsheet

Historically a cheap single page of entertaining news, usually crime or sensationalised accounts of disasters and a precursor to the newspaper. By the 1860s, cheap newspapers had largely taken their place. Today, broadsheet refers to a large format newspaper (in Australia, generally 841mm × 594mm). In some countries, including Australia, broadsheet newspapers are commonly perceived to contain more 'quality' or in-depth

journalistic reporting than their tabloid counterparts.

Broadside

A precursor to the newspaper; cheap single pages of entertaining news, usually crime or sensationalised accounts of disasters. By the 1860s, cheap newspapers had largely taken their place.

Canon

The set of texts regarded as forming the essence of a particular body of work.

Carriage

Those industries responsible for distributing media content.

Celeactor

A fictional character who has both a private and public life, and exists independently of his or her creator; for example, Dame Edna Everage.

Celebrity

The familiar stranger; a celebrity is simultaneously a text and an industry.

Celebrity culture

A culture based on the individual and individual identity; for example, news that consists mainly of gossip, scandal or snippets from celebrities' PR handouts, or where social issues are constantly reframed as personal issues.

Celebrity image

The image of the celebrity as it appears in the media; a construction designed to connote the ideas and values of the celebrity.

Celetoid

A celebrity created to fill a gap in an industry, or for some specified

purpose (such as reality show winners).

Chatroom

A site on a computer network where online conversations are held in real time by a number of users.

Churnalism

A term coined by British journalist Nick Davies to describe the way media rely on media releases, public relations and wire copy for content.

Cinematography

The industrial process of shooting, manipulating and developing film.

Citizen journalist

A member of the public who acts in the role of a journalist gathering news and new information (including images), which are communicated to an audience.

Civil action

A court case relating to disputes between two parties.

Civil law system

A legal system based primarily on the interpretation of statutory codes, such as those existing in much of Europe (as opposed to systems based on the doctrine of precedent, such as the UK common law system).

Click bait

Internet content, particularly of a sensational or provocative nature, whose main purpose is to attract attention and draw visitors to a particular web page.

Closed questions

Questions whose answers are limited to 'yes', 'no', or similar precise information.

Closed text

A text that focuses on a specific meaning and permits little space for the reader to generate a variety of interpretations.

Cloud

An internet-based system through which personal information is transmitted, processed and stored, and over which the individual has little knowledge, involvement or control.

Code of ethics

A set of rules prescribing the ethical practices that all members of a profession should follow.

Code

Part of the signs that make up texts; including such elements as colour, dress, lighting, angles, words used and format on the page.

Comma

A punctuation mark used to indicate pauses or to separate ideas in a sentence.

Commodification

In the context of news, the view that news is a commodity that can be valued, and bought and sold like any other good in the market place, reflecting the globalisation and deregulation of news.

Commodity

An economic good; in relation to celebrities, it refers to someone who is subject to ready exchange or exploitation within a market.

Common law system

The basic structure of law in Australia, based on a combination of the decisions that judges make according

to statute and case law (precedents set by earlier judgments in higher courts).

Commutation

The replacement of one element of a text with another to see how this affects how meaning is made.

Computer-assisted reporting (CAR)

Internet research by journalists involving deep analysis of databases using spreadsheets and database managers.

Confidential sources

People who provide—while keeping their identities secret—important information that might otherwise not be available to the public.

Conflict

A state of opposition or hostilities; in the context of judgments about what makes news, this might be a significant violent conflict like a war or a non-violent conflict such as a disagreement.

Connotations

The possible signifieds that attach to a signifier.

Consequentialism

A branch of ethical philosophy in which notions of morality are based not on a set of rules but on observing the outcomes—the consequences—of every separate action. Consequentialists weigh up the consequences and decide where the majority of the benefit lies.

Consumerist model

The manufacture of news as a profit-driven model; news is seen primarily as a business enterprise, with news as a commodity.

Contact book

An electronic or hard copy listing of journalistic sources of information, often with notations to update the information. Journalists refer to their contact book regularly when seeking comment for stories.

Contempt of court

Any action with the potential to damage a fair trial.

Content

The subject of the text, and how that subject is presented to us.

Content analysis

Analysis that focuses on the frequency of the presence or absence of words or categories within texts.

Content providers

Media industries that actually produce content, which is then distributed by carriers.

Content words

Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs; the largest part of the English vocabulary and the words that supply substance.

Context

The location of the text; the point in time and space where an audience will locate it.

Convergence

The coming together of what were once separate media texts and industries.

Conversationalisation of news

The way the language of news is structured to mirror ordinary conversation; blurring the boundary between the public and private and reflecting the fact that while most

news is public in nature, much of it, especially broadcast and online news, is consumed in private domains like lounge rooms.

Copyright

The exclusive right, granted by law for a period of time, to control the publishing and copying of a particular publication or artistic work. It does not protect ideas, but only the material form of those ideas.

Coranto

The earliest predecessor of the newspaper, a *coranto* was a small news pamphlet that was only produced when a newsworthy event occurred. From the Spanish *coranto* ('runner'); that is, fast-delivered news.

Creative commons licensing

A form of licensing that encompasses the spectrum of possibilities between full copyright (all rights reserved) and the public domain (no rights reserved). Creative commons licences help owners keep their copyright while inviting certain uses of the owner's work—a 'some rights reserved' copyright.

Criminal action

A court case brought by the state against somebody who has committed a crime.

Cross-media ownership

The ownership of one major source of news and information (such as a television station) in the same territory as another other major source (such as a daily newspaper or radio station).

Cross-ownership

The consolidation of the control of a variety of media companies and

industries (and therefore power) in the hands of a few major companies.

Cross-promotion

The promotion by celebrities, programs and industries of other celebrities, programs and industries that have the same owner.

Crowdsource

To obtain information or input into a particular task or project by enlisting the services of a large number of people, either paid or unpaid, typically via the internet.

Cultural competency

Knowledge and ideas that are gained from experience; cultural knowledge is 'insider' knowledge that is known only by people within a particular culture or by people who have learned about the culture through interaction with it.

Cultural convergence

The intersection of cultures: locally, nationally and globally.

Cultural currency

The knowledge we acquire from consuming media.

Cultural product

A product that contains meanings, values and ideas; that is, a product that functions as a form of communication.

Culture jamming

Resistance to cultural hegemony by means of guerrilla communication strategies such as graffiti, satire or some other reappropriation of the original medium's iconography to comment upon itself. It differs from other forms of artistic expression or vandalism in that its intent is

to subvert mainstream culture for independent communication or otherwise disrupt mainstream communication.

Currency

In the context of news, the impact of recent and breaking news arising from controversial and emotionally charged events.

Current affairs

The news media's delivery of political and social events or issues of the present time, usually on television or radio.

Cut and paste

The transfer of information, by a journalist, from a PR release to a news item, without the application of journalistic editing skills or judgment.

Cyberspace

The notional realm in which electronic information exists or is exchanged; the imagined world of virtual reality.

Damages

An amount of money awarded by a court as a remedy in a civil action.

Defamation

The reduction of the reputation of another person in the minds of ordinary people by exposing that person to ridicule, or by causing them to be shunned and avoided.

Delay

The way in which consumption of television is indefinitely postponed through advertising, narrative or scheduling.

Delivery platforms

The ability of media to act as platforms for the delivery of media texts.

Demographic analysis

The statistical analysis of audiences, based upon selected population characteristics such as age, gender, race, sexuality, income, disability, mobility, education, employment status and location, which shows distributions of values within a demographic variable and changes in trends over time.

Denotation

The most likely connotation of a signifier, often determined as a matter of common sense or by looking at the relationship of the text to other texts or the context in which the text is found.

Deontology

Also known as 'rights-based' ethics; it assumes that each individual has certain rights, no matter the circumstances, and that no innocent person should be harmed or killed for any reason.

Détournement

The reuse of a well-known text to create a new text that often carries a message contrary to the original.

Dialogic

Descriptive of texts that are structured as dialogue.

Dial-up

The earliest form of access to the internet, via slow signals sent through a telephone wire.

Diaspora

The scattering of a population from one geographical area throughout the world.

Digital divide

The gap between those who can access media technology (thanks

to wealth, culture and geographical location) and those who cannot.

Digital media

The mechanisms for digitally transmitting information and entertainment.

Digital technology

The transmission of electronic information using binary code to store and transmit data; replaces analogue technology.

Discourse

A way of representing the world.

Discourse analysis

An analysis of how texts support or subvert overall views of the world, such as patriarchy or media power.

Disintermediation

The removal of wholesalers, distributors and retailers (the 'middle men') from the intermediary processes, so manufacturers can deliver products directly to consumers.

Disobedience contempt

The refusal by journalists to reveal their sources when asked by a court to do so.

Disposable celebrity

A celebrity manufactured on a production line in order to be replaced in the near future by the next disposable celebrity.

Docugames

Interactive reality games where players are involved in role-play scenarios that are based on real events. They blend reality with interactive entertainment by allowing the player to control and

alter historical figures and events. Throughout the game there are links to articles and interviews from or about the real event.

Documentary film

A fact-based film that depicts actual events and people.

Domestication of texts

The adaptation of global texts by individuals and local media cultures.

Dox

To search for and publish private or identifying information about a particular individual on the internet, typically with malicious intent.

eCommerce

Business conducted online; internet-based, interactive, networked connections between producers, consumers and service providers.

Embargo

A notice forbidding the release of public information before a certain time or date; usually associated with a public relations announcement.

Empowered reading

A reading of media informed by an understanding of how media work, how audiences can be manipulated and the choices being offered to audiences in the larger mediasphere.

Encoding

Closing down the possible connotations a text can have and thereby directing audiences to read texts in a certain way.

Engineering consent

According to Edward Bernays, the conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organised habits and opinions

of the masses as part of the way democratic society functions.

Enlightenment

The period, from about CE 1500 to about 1800, when feudal, religion-based societies gave way to secularised, democratic societies.

Epistemology

The use of logic, psychology, philosophy and linguistics to study knowledge and how it is processed by humans.

Ethics

A system of moral principles by which a person can judge right and wrong in any field; for example, media ethics.

Euphemism

A mild or vague word or phrase that is used instead of a blunt, harsh word.

Evidence

Signs or proofs of the existence or truth of some proposition; information that helps somebody to reach a particular conclusion, through empirical materials (physical items) and observable phenomena (such as heat or cold).

Exclusivity

The exclusion of an audience member, as if he or she has been excluded from a certain community.

Exnomination

The process by which dominant ideas become so obvious they don't draw attention to themselves; instead they just seem like common sense.

Expressive medium

The notion that film works best by expressing the feelings of the artist,

through metaphor, allegory and performance.

Fan culture

Term derived from 'fanatic'; those people who follow a particular media form, genre or personality with great enthusiasm, for the pleasure of doing so rather than a desire to earn an income.

Fan fiction

Fiction, written by fans of a particular media text, that features characters from that text.

Fanzine

An amateur magazine produced for fans of a pastime or celebrity; the concept originated among science fiction fans in the 1930s, spread gradually among other interest groups during the 1960s, and was adopted by a wide range of groups during the past twenty years.

Fifth Estate

The new media technologies, such as the internet, as modes of news delivery; originally applied to radio and television.

Film genres

Film categories, such as westerns, mysteries and melodramas, produced in order to keep costs low while building presold audiences.

Film movement

A group of films loosely directed towards similar formal or social ends.

Finite verb

A verb that must be present in an S–V–O structure and which can be inflected for past, present or future tense.

Flack

A term often used to describe PR practitioners; thought to have been formed by melding 'flak'—for flak catcher; someone paid to catch the flak directed at their employer—with 'hack' (a mediocre writer).

Flow

In television, the way one moment of drama or information leads to the next.

Fluency

Smooth and articulate spoken expression.

Form

The shape of the text and the way it appears before us.

Formalist medium

The notion that film works best by presenting the best possible examples of film styles and techniques (the form).

Fourth Estate

A group of journalists practising watchdog journalism, holding the powerful to account.

Forum

In ancient Rome, a public square or marketplace where business was conducted and the law courts were situated.

Framing

A process of selecting and rejecting information in the construction of a news story by placing emphasis on a particular aspect or angle.

Freedom of expression

For media workers, the fundamental legal right to discover important information and convey it to the public.

Freedom of information

Laws that grant some rights of access to government documents of public interest.

Function words

Conjunctions, prepositions and articles; words that help to show the relationships between content words, thus giving meaning to the content words.

Gatekeeper

A media professional, such as a subeditor, who decides which news stories or other types of information will be selected or rejected for public consumption.

Gazette

One of the earliest forms of a newspaper, which published official government information. Named after a *gazetta*, a small coin in the Republic of Venice that was the price of their early news-sheets, the name was later applied to many types of newspaper.

Genre

Categories of texts according to shared narrative and iconographic features and codes, as well as categories of commercial products provided by producers and marketers and expected by audiences of texts.

German expressionism

A form of filmmaking developed in Germany, particularly Berlin, during the 1920s, which featured highly stylised sets and symbolic acting to reveal the internal emotional struggles of its protagonists (and society).

Globalisation

The tendency towards increasing standardisation of life, markets and economics around the world.

Glocalisation

The transformation of global texts so that they become relevant to local cultures.

Grab

An excerpt of a journalist's interview with the talent (or source).

Grammar

The rules of the relationship that words have to one another in a sentence.

Grog's Gamut

A blog maintained by Australian public servant Greg Jericho, who maintained his anonymity until Australian journalist James Massola 'outed' him during the 2010 federal election.

Hard news

News stories that aim to inform the community about events and happenings and to provide citizens with the information they require to be able to participate as fully informed citizens in the democratic process.

Hegemony

The ability of elite groups to acquire and/or remain in power by convincing subordinate groups that it is in their best interests to accept the dominance of this elite.

Home theatre

Electronic facilities in the home, such as large screens and five-speaker sound systems, that emulate facilities once found only in cinemas and theatres.

Honest opinion

A defence in defamation; the right to publish opinion and comment as long as it is reasonably and honestly researched, and without malice.

House style

The particular set of grammatical rules, conventions and organisational preferences chosen by individual publishers and media organisations; usually prescribed in a style guide.

Human interest

In the context of news, stories that revolve around ordinary people, or issues judged to be socially interesting or important.

Hybridity

The mixture of media cultures to create a multi-originated media.

Hype

Extravagant and overstated publicity; a contraction of the word 'hyperbole', which means an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.

Hypertext

The embedding of links to one internet text from another.

Iconography

From icon; the most recognisable aspects of a text's form and content that represent that text; for example, white hats (the good guys) and black hats (the bad guys) in Western movies.

Ideology

A set of ideas, assumptions or beliefs for thinking about the world.

IM

Short for instant messaging; the exchange of text messages in real time between two or more people logged into a particular IM service.

Impact

The size of the consequences of a news story; the greater or wider the consequences of a news story, the greater will be its impact.

Inclusivity

The inclusion of an audience member, as if he or she belongs to a certain community.

Indigenisation

The appropriation and reframing of globalised texts to make them relevant to local cultures.

Industrial convergence

The intersection of a variety of media industries through cross-ownership and cross-promotion.

Infotainment

Originally a term that referred just to television programming that dealt with serious issues or current affairs in an entertaining way; today the term applies across all media, and refers to the way in which soft news style, in both form and content, is delivered in news and current affairs stories.

Intellectual property

A broad term used to refer to intangible property created by the mind.

Interculturalism

The interaction, sharing and exchange between cultures, wherein each culture benefits from exposure to the other.

Internet Protocol Television (IPTV)

Television content on demand through the internet; YouTube is currently the best-known example.

Interpellation

Actively seeking out an audience; encouraging the audience to contribute to the text in some way.

Intertextuality

The idea that texts do not exist in isolation, but rather are interdependent. Texts frequently make meaning through their relationship with other texts, through citation, adaptation, satire, allusion and plagiarism. These other texts (secondary texts) are called intertexts.

Intro or announcer read

The introductory part of an electronic media story, usually read live by the newsreader, and scripted by the reporter.

Inverted pyramid

The style of writing news that places the most important information at the beginning of the story, followed by less important information, and so on to the end of the story; this enables the story to be cut from the bottom in order to fit the space available.

J-bloggers

Internet bloggers who act in the role of journalists disseminating newsworthy information, and who subscribe to the journalistic ideals of an obligation to the truth and the public's right to know; term coined by Nicola Goc.

Journal

From the French *journal*; a daily record of events; therefore, a daily newspaper or magazine.

Journalism

The gathering and disseminating of new information to a wide audience

about current events, trends, issues and people.

Journalist

A person who practises journalism; someone who gathers and disseminates new information about current events, trends, issues and people to a wide audience; from the French *journal*, which comes from the Latin *diurnal* ('daily').

Jurisdiction

Either the power granted to a legal body, such as a court or tribunal, to administer justice within a defined area of responsibility; or a geographically delimited area within which certain laws are seen to apply (for example, a state, territory or nation).

Legitimacy

The process that each discourse employs as it seeks to authorise its truth, rightness and superiority.

Literary merit

The intrinsic value or worth of a literary work based on the quality of writing, inventiveness of story or ability to capture a certain period of time or emotion; often used to demarcate literature from other formulaic or genre fiction, and from the wider body of popular culture.

Mainstream

The most familiar, popular or otherwise generally available of any art form, especially film.

Manufacturing consent

The way in which Western mass media act to subdue popular dissent and to assist in the realisation of political and corporate objectives while giving the

illusion of 'freedom'; coined in 1922 by the American writer Walter Lippmann and popularised later by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman.

Maralinga

The nuclear weapons test site established in the South Australian desert where the UK tested seven major atomic bombs and conducted hundreds of smaller nuclear experiments between 1956 and 1963.

Mashup

A website or application that combines content from more than one source into an integrated experience.

Mass media

Media designed to attract the greatest number of audience members.

Media

Content and distribution mechanisms through which information and/or entertainment is transmitted.

Media alert

Also known as a 'diary note'; a document used by PR practitioners to alert journalists and editors to a forthcoming event, often a media conference or a speech by a prominent person. It is a form of invitation tailored to the needs of the media, and is generally distributed by email or facsimile between one week and one day before the event.

Media baron

A replacement for the term 'press baron'; it refers to the early English newspaper proprietors, such as Lords Beaverbrook, Rothermere and Northcliffe, and contemporary media owners such as Rupert Murdoch.

Media conference

A PR event in which a major news announcement is made to assembled journalists. The announcement is usually followed by journalists questioning the news source.

Media effects model

The injection (like a hypodermic syringe) of ideas by media into an essentially passive and vulnerable mass audience. Sometimes also referred to as the direct effects or hypodermic syringe model.

Media event

A news story that becomes an historically important communication event, interrupting the flow of all other news.

Media kit

A cardboard folder that contains a range of material relevant to a media event such as a media conference. As well as a media release, they may include background information, photographs and pens.

Media monitoring organisation

A company that may be contracted to track media activity and provide print media clippings and audio and video recordings of media coverage. These companies generally also offer analysis of news trends. Media monitoring organisations are used extensively by PR professionals to measure the impact of various publicity activities.

Media practitioner

Any person involved in the production of media.

Media release

A document, written by a PR practitioner in journalistic style, that

provides a story intended for use by the media.

Media text

Anything produced and/or distributed by a media industry from which we can make meaning.

Mediasphere

The subtle and obvious connections between media texts, whether fictional (popular media) or factual (journalism), that form a larger whole.

Mediation

The function of media; the communication of messages, whether information, entertainment or a mixture of both, by media.

Merchandising

The marketing of a wide range of consumer goods bearing images from a specific media product.

Metanarrative

A super-narrative built up from all the narratives in all of the intertexts that represent the celebrity.

Metaphor

An implicit or explicit comparison between signs, where the qualities of one are transferred to another.

Metaverse

A fictional, virtual world.

Methodology

A systematic way of producing knowledge, involving both the production and analysis of data; a way of testing, accepting, developing or rejecting a theory.

Metonymy

The standing in of a part or element of

Moblog

A blog where participants appear to behave like regular mobs, but unlike their flesh-and-blood counterparts, their ideas can have instantaneous impact on a worldwide platform.

Mockumentary

A melding of the words 'mock' and 'documentary'; a film or television program presented as a documentary recording real life but which is in fact fictional—a commonly used medium for parody and satire.

Modding

A contraction of 'game modification': the addition of new content to games.

Modernity

The mainstream of Western thought, from the 19th century until the late 20th century; its underlying beliefs were based on ideas of progress, rationality and equality.

Mise en scène

Literally 'placing on stage'; it refers to all the physical elements of a shot (that is, everything that is placed before the camera—props, sets, actors, costumes, make-up and lighting) and how these are arranged to tell the story (for example, revealing narrative information, emotion or even a character's mental state).

MMPORG

Massively multiplayer online role-playing games; a genre of gaming where large numbers of players interact with each other in a virtual world.

Mainstream media (MSM)

Established mainstream television and radio stations and large established newspapers.

Muckraker

A term coined by President Theodore Roosevelt, referring to investigative journalists who challenged his government. The term came from John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), where it was used to describe men who look nowhere but down.

Multiculturalism

The conferring of equal rights on the many distinct cultural groups that make up a society.

Myth

An ideology that has become so accepted, so commonplace, that it is no longer recognised as an ideology.

Narrative convergence

Narrative that does not originate from a single textual site but flows across, between and through a number of different delivery platforms.

Narrative transparency

A textual process by which audiences can project their own values, beliefs, rites and rituals into imported media and make use of these devices.

Narrative tropes

Words, phrases or expressions that recur in particular narratives; for example, the femme fatale (sexually attractive but dangerous woman) in crime movies of the 1940s.

Narrowcasting

The distribution of media content to increasingly segmented audiences, to the point where the advertising or media message can be tailored to fit the special needs or consumer profile of members of the targeted audience.

Natsound

Natural sound, recorded on location.

New media

The mechanisms for digitally transmitting information and entertainment.

News agenda

The influence of news providers on the way both members of the public and people in power absorb and react to public events.

News culture

The predominating attitudes and behaviours that characterise the operations of newsrooms and media organisations.

News discourse

The way in which news professionals express ideas in written and spoken language, including their evaluation of such elements as newsworthiness.

News story

Information packaged in order to afford maximum readability; either in the pattern of beginning–middle–end, or in the inverted pyramid pattern of most important–slightly less important–least important.

News values

Criteria that the media apply to determine if and what information will be produced as news; including impact, proximity, prominence, human interest, novelty, conflict and currency.

Novelty

In the context of news, stories that reveal rare, unusual or bizarre information.

Object

In grammar, the thing being acted upon in a sentence; the subject of the sentence acts on its object.

Object of study

What you are studying; the focus of your research.

Objectivity

The application of observation and experimentation to reality in order to avoid bias or prejudice; the principle that requires journalists to be fair, nonpartisan, disinterested and factual.

Open questions

Questions whose answers can elicit a wide range of responses; usually these questions begin with the words 'Who', 'What', 'When', 'Where', 'How' and 'Why'.

Open source licensing

A copyright licence to modify computer software code, generally entailing a requirement to make available to others any modifications that are made.

Open text

A text that has many possible meanings.

Outro or back announce

The announcement made by the live announcer or newsreader after the packaged part of an electronic media script has finished.

Pacing

The speed at which a reporter, newsreader or presenter speaks.

Paradigm

The greatest spread of possible connotations that any signifier can have.

Penny press

Cheap 19th-century newspapers that cost a penny and were marketed

to the newly literate working class, leading to a dramatic increase in newspaper circulation.

Performative documentary

A style of documentary film that is constructed around a performance by the filmmaker.

Periodical

A magazine or journal published at regular intervals, such as weekly, monthly or quarterly.

Plaintiff

A person bringing a civil action to court.

Pluralism

Diversity in society, and therefore in the media; pluralist media offer us a wide range of choices.

Podcast

From iPod broadcast; an audio broadcast that has been converted to an MP3 file or other audio file format for playback in a digital player. Although today many podcasts are played on a computer, the original idea was to listen on a portable device; hence, the 'pod' name from 'iPod'. Although podcasts are mostly verbal, they may contain music, images and video.

Polysemy

The openness of texts to many different interpretations; a splintering of interpretations.

Popular media

Media watched or listened to by the majority of the population; for example, tabloid newspapers, soft news, commercial television and radio, computer games and comic books.

Portal

An entry point to the World Wide Web, from which a user gains access to news websites, search engines, email pages and databases.

Postmodern

A way of thinking that encourages the consideration of multiple points of view. Postmodern thinking considers that there is no single true representation of any aspect of the world: rather, there are multiple ways of making sense of the world and therefore multiple competing 'truths'.

Postmodernity

A type of Western thought that, while sharing the basic ideals of modernity, accepts that a wide variety of groups within a society have different perspectives on society and ways of being in that society, and that these differences should be respected and alternative viewpoints considered.

Poststructuralism

A collection of 20th-century philosophical responses to structuralism that are similar in that they reject definitions and philosophies that claim to be absolute or universal.

PR consultancy

A company set up specifically to carry out contract PR work, in contrast to a PR person who is on the staff of a company or organisation.

Premodernity

The mainstream of Western thought until the 19th century; its underlying beliefs were based on religion, nature and a sense of divine justice.

Presumption of innocence

The right of an accused person to innocence in law until a court convicts that person.

Primary text

The original information that forms the basis of the rest of textual analysis.

Proactive PR

Often called 'agenda setting'; the creation of a story, usually a positive story, where none existed; examples include calling a media conference to announce the establishment of a new award, or sending out a media release about the findings of a specially commissioned study.

Prominence

A news value in which one or more of the protagonists in a media story are well known, thus adding to the newsworthiness of the story.

Propaganda

The deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.

Propaganda model

Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman's argument that the mass media is a tool used by its owners and by governments to deliver a capitalist ideology, rather than to scrutinise governments and other powerful groups in society.

Prosumer

Where the consumer becomes a producer in their own right, actually contributing to the content of the media form in some way. An example is a computer user whose

activities (such as influencing the rules of computer games) produce a convergence between a producer and consumer.

Proximity

The distance of the news event from the audience; the closer the proximity of news to the environment of the person absorbing a news story, the greater the impact of the news item.

Publication

A communication in a defamation action; it must reach at least one other person—hence, a fax, a postcard, an email, a comment on Facebook or a tweet may be a publication.

Public relations (PR)

The controlled release or exchange of information in various ways and through various outlets, most visibly through the news media.

Public Relations Institute of Australia (PRIA)

The peak professional body for PR practitioners in Australia.

Public sphere

The public spaces of work, leisure, politics, religion, academia and the mass media, where issues and ideas are encountered, articulated, negotiated and discussed as part of the ongoing process of reaching consensus or compromise in democratic societies.

Public sphericules

Multiple smaller public spheres—based on particular cultures and subcultures relating to age, sexuality,

gender or race—that interconnect with each other.

Publics

In PR, a buzzword that refers to the different audience sectors, such as employees, investors, media, community sectors and government, that often require separate communication methods and skills, with emphasis on dialogue rather than one-way communication.

Qualified privilege

Material that otherwise might be regarded as defamatory, but which is protected from prosecution.

Quasar

A shooting star; a celebrity whose popularity remains only for the duration of a major event. The term is scientifically inaccurate, as a quasar is not a shooting star (transitory) but a 'quasi-astronomical object': a mysterious far-off object that might be a star, or perhaps a mini-galaxy in violent turmoil.

Quote

A statement attributed to someone; a direct quote is a statement in quotation marks, while an indirect quote has no quotation marks.

Radio

The wireless transmission through air of electromagnetic waves, and the device designed to collect these signals and turn them into sound that you can listen to.

Ratings

Nightly and weekly surveys that are conducted to determine how many viewers are watching particular

programs on particular channels. These results are used to attract advertisers and to determine programming schedules. The practice of ratings surveys is often referred to as the 'ratings war' between commercial television or radio stations.

Rational media

Media that promote political and social debate, including broadsheet newspapers, political pamphlets, hard news reports, political websites and public broadcasters.

Reactive PR

Public relations that responds to external events, including crises.

Reading a text

The first act of interpreting the text; the point at which we start to make meaning.

Realism

The way in which media try to represent ideas or situations in ways that members of the audience believe are real.

Realist filmmaking

A style of filmmaking seeking to show great fidelity to real life, often through unscripted dialogue and the use of handheld camera and long takes, necessarily limiting the intrusion of the filmmaker; best seen in the British documentary movement and the neo-realist movement in Italy.

Receiver

The text's destination.

Reception studies

Studies of the ways in which audiences consume (receive) media.

Reintermediation

The reintroduction of a business intermediary, especially an electronic intermediary; a new business (or businesses) designed to link manufacturers to consumers.

Remedy

Compensation to a plaintiff in a civil action.

Representation

The selection of elements that media communicate to audiences; those aspects of the world that media 're-present' to audiences.

Round

A form of reporting where the journalist specialises in a particular subject area and covers that area in depth. Examples include court or police rounds. This same role is known as a 'beat' in the USA.

RSS

An acronym most commonly expanded as 'Really Simple Syndication'; RSS feeds allow frequently updated content—such as news headlines, news feeds, news stories, excerpts from discussion forums and corporate information—to be delivered to a computer or mobile device as soon as it is published.

Rule of law

Consistent, fair rules of society that apply equally to all citizens.

Russian montage

A form of filmmaking developed in the USSR in the 1920s, based on Sergei Eisenstein's notion of using separate, contrasting images to construct combined new images for the viewer.

Script

In electronic news media, the written part of a radio or television story.

Search engine

A system of searching and analysing the content of all non-hidden websites, analysing the relationship between websites and ranking sites on the basis of links from other highly relevant sites; the most famous search engine is Google.

Secondary text

An analytical or descriptive study that interacts, informs or otherwise elucidates the original information you are studying.

Segue

Pronounced *seg-way*; the transition between elements of a broadcast story or show, including the 'throw' that the news reader uses to introduce a pre-recorded package.

Semiotics

Sometimes also referred to as semiology or semiotic studies; the study of the role of signification in communication, including, but not limited to, how meaning is made (both how it is produced and how it is understood by an audience member).

Sender

The text's point of origin.

Seventh art

As an art new to the 20th century, cinema was added to the traditional arts: painting, sculpture, architecture, poetry, theatre and philosophy.

Shield laws

Legal protection for journalists who refuse to reveal their confidential sources to a court.

Shorthand

A system of rapid handwriting made possible by using abbreviations of words.

Shot–reverse shot

The standard method of showing two actors interacting in films and television: first the image of one speaker, then the image of the other speaker.

Show business

The business of entertainment that seeks to strike a balance between the 'show' (entertainment spectacle) and the 'business' (making a profit).

Show-don't-tell principle

The advice given to all media writers to use interesting material to illustrate a point rather than bluntly stating something you want the reader to know.

Sign

A unit of meaning; a structural element of a text that produces meaning(s).

Significance

The impact of a particular media text's representation of the world. It refers to both social and political significance, and is derived from the number of times a media text is referenced in other texts; the more it is referenced, the more significant a media text will become, and the more impact that text's representation of the world will have.

Signification

The elements of semiotics: the *signifier* is the physical part of the sign; the *signified* is the mental part of the sign—the abstract concept represented by the sign.

and *signification* is the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

Signposts

Words and sentence structures that show listeners, readers or viewers the context of a story and/or the way in which they should react to it; for example, broadcast news journalists structure their lead stories in such a way as to provide context for the story first before revealing the new thing that has happened.

Slash fiction

Unauthorised fiction, written by fans of a particular media text, that features characters from that text in narratives that are sexual, and often homosexual, in nature.

Social networking site

A social structure composed of individuals and or organisations that become 'nodes' connected to each other through multiple interdependencies such as friendships, common interests, sexual relationships, prestige and any other number of emotions and concerns.

Socialisation

The process by which individuals are embedded into a culture, consequently learning, absorbing and practising particular characteristics of that culture.

Soft news

News (sometimes called infotainment) that does not have a high priority in the news values scale, and encompasses such fields as entertainment, sport, lifestyle, human interest, celebrity and the arts.

Source

In journalistic terms, someone who communicates information to a journalist.

Spin

The process whereby an organisation or individual ensures that information placed into the public sphere, usually through a PR channel, puts them in the best possible light. This word has a negative connotation, as it implies information manipulation.

Spin doctor

A person paid to bend information to the needs of their bosses or clients, often beyond what a PR person might normally do; usually relates to political communication.

Splurge journalism

The up-to-the-minute, immediate saturation coverage of major events.

Spoiler

A source of information that reveals important details about narrative before the wider audience has had access to it. The term is so well known it became the catch phrase of the character River Song (Alex Kingston) on *Doctor Who*, referring to her ability to time travel and thus 'spoil' elements of people's futures.

Standard English

The dominant form of English in the public sphere; the form of English considered 'correct' in terms of grammar and vocabulary.

Star

A celebrity who commands prominence, longevity and power in his or her particular field.

Statement of theme

A summary sentence to remind the reader of a feature article of its main idea.

Stereotype

An oversimplified, standardised image or idea held by one person or social group about another.

Structuring absences

Elements in the text that have meaning despite (or because of) the fact they have been left out.

Studio system

The set of practices that dominated the American film industry from the 1920s to 1950s, chiefly based around vertical integration and the conception, scripting and production of films with factory-style efficiency.

Style

The overall use of a language, whether written (journalism, broadcasting, television or literature), aural (film and television sound) or oral (radio and television presentation); in journalism, it combines grammatical rules, journalistic conventions and the individual preferences of writers, editors and managers.

Subeditor (sub)

A member of a media organisation who edits and corrects material submitted by other people, such as reporters and columnists.

Subject

The grammatical topic of a sentence; what or who is performing an action in a sentence.

Subjective viewing position

The taking on of the viewpoint of a character in a text by an audience member; the addressee position actually created as a space within the text itself.

Subjectivity

The addressing of reality through individual experience, perception and interpretation; the expression of an individual's point of view.

Sub judice

The period, while a trial is pending or under way, when heavy restrictions are placed on the release of information about the trial.

S–V–O sentence

A standard sentence structure in English containing a subject (what is acting), the verb (the action being taken) and object (what is being acted upon).

Synergy

The combined marketing of products, owned by the same corporation, such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the parts.

Syntagm

The selection that an audience member makes from the paradigms of possible connotations.

Tabloid

In a literal sense, a type of newspaper that is smaller and easier to read than a broadsheet paper (roughly 432 mm by 279 mm and generally half the size of a broadsheet). Generally, it refers to news that focuses on the sensational, and is recognised by an informal vernacular delivery, featuring such subjects as crime, sex, scandal and

sport. Today, hard news stories, even in serious news organisations, are often delivered in a tabloid style.

Tabloidisation

News that is made as easy to read and absorb as possible, often featuring photographs accompanied by sensational news delivered in an informal style.

Talent

In electronic media, the person interviewed for a story.

Talkback radio

Radio programming that includes telephone conversations with members of the audience.

Technological convergence

Media intersection enabled by technological development.

Technological prevention measure

A device, product, technology or component (including a computer program) that in the normal course of its operation controls access to or use of the copyright-protected work; for example, software coding that prevents a CD from being used in a car.

Technological singularity

The point at which technology surpasses humanity to create superhuman intelligence; appropriated from astrophysics by science fiction novelist Vernor Vinge in the 1980s and applied to L.J. Good's idea of an 'intelligence explosion' [1965].

Text

Anything from which we can make meaning.

Textual analysis

An educated guess at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of the text.

Theory

The body of rules, ideas, principles and techniques that applies to a particular subject, as distinct from actual practice.

Throw

A brief line introducing the person who is about to speak, often the reporter whose voiceover is about to be played.

Timing

The times allowed in the script for various sound elements: an overall timing for the whole package, and a timing for the pre-recorded part of the package.

Transmedia storytelling

Stories that are told across a number of different delivery platforms, with each platform carrying a slightly different aspect of the story.

Tweet

Originally referred to a posting on Twitter; today is both a noun and a verb.

Tweetlonger

Also known as 'Twitlonger'; a simple service that allows the posting of messages on Twitter of more than 140 characters. 'Long Reply' is a similar service.

Utilitarianism

The ethical doctrine that the greatest happiness for the greatest number should be the criterion of a virtuous action.

Van Diemen's Land

The former name of Tasmania; it was known by Europeans as Van Diemen's Land until 1853 when the name was changed to Tasmania (after Dutch explorer Abel Jansoon Tasman).

The name change came in the same year that transportation of convicts ceased.

Vertical integration

The ownership by one company of all levels of production in any industry; in the film industry, it was the combined production, distribution and exhibition of films in the USA before the 1950s.

Virtual community

An online community where communication is achieved through technology rather than face-to-face interaction.

Virtual identity

A fictional identity invented by an online member of a virtual community.

Virtual space

An alternative space to generally accepted reality, experienced by

people interacting with other people and their environment via media forms like computers and not through face-to-face contact; also known as 'cyberspace'.

Virtue ethics

A branch of ethical philosophy in which the emphasis on virtues, or moral character, in contrast to duties or rules (deontology) or the consequences of actions (consequentialism).

Vlog

Short for video blogging; a form of blogging in which the medium is video.

Voiceover

Also voicer or VO; the recorded voice of the reporter explaining an aspect of the story.

Water-cooler show

A film, television or radio program that generates great interest wherever members of the public gather in discussion, especially around the office water cooler.

Web browser

The mechanism by which every computer user can navigate the World Wide Web.

WikiLeaks

A non-profit online media organisation that publishes otherwise unavailable documents from anonymous sources.

Wiki

A server program that allows users to collaborate in forming the content of a website. Users edit the content of other users.

Wikipedia

An online encyclopedia that is continually edited and added to by its users.

World Wide Web

The digital system that potentially links every computer in the world with every other computer; first named as such in 1991.

YouTube

A user-created online video bank.

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Media and Journalism: New Approaches to Theory and Practice is a complete introduction to the fields of media and journalism. Integrating media theory with journalism practice, it presents readers with important concepts and theoretical approaches in media studies. Theories are clearly explained and accompanied by a range of engaging examples, case studies and tools that demonstrate how these theories play out in practice. This text also provides practical training in key journalistic skills including how to write a feature article, how to conduct a broadcast interview, and how to tailor your writing for a variety of mediums. The third edition of *Media and Journalism* ensures that students develop both the broad knowledge base and professional skills required for their future careers in media, journalism, public relations and communication.

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- Includes chapter summaries, and revision and reflection questions for deeper learning

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