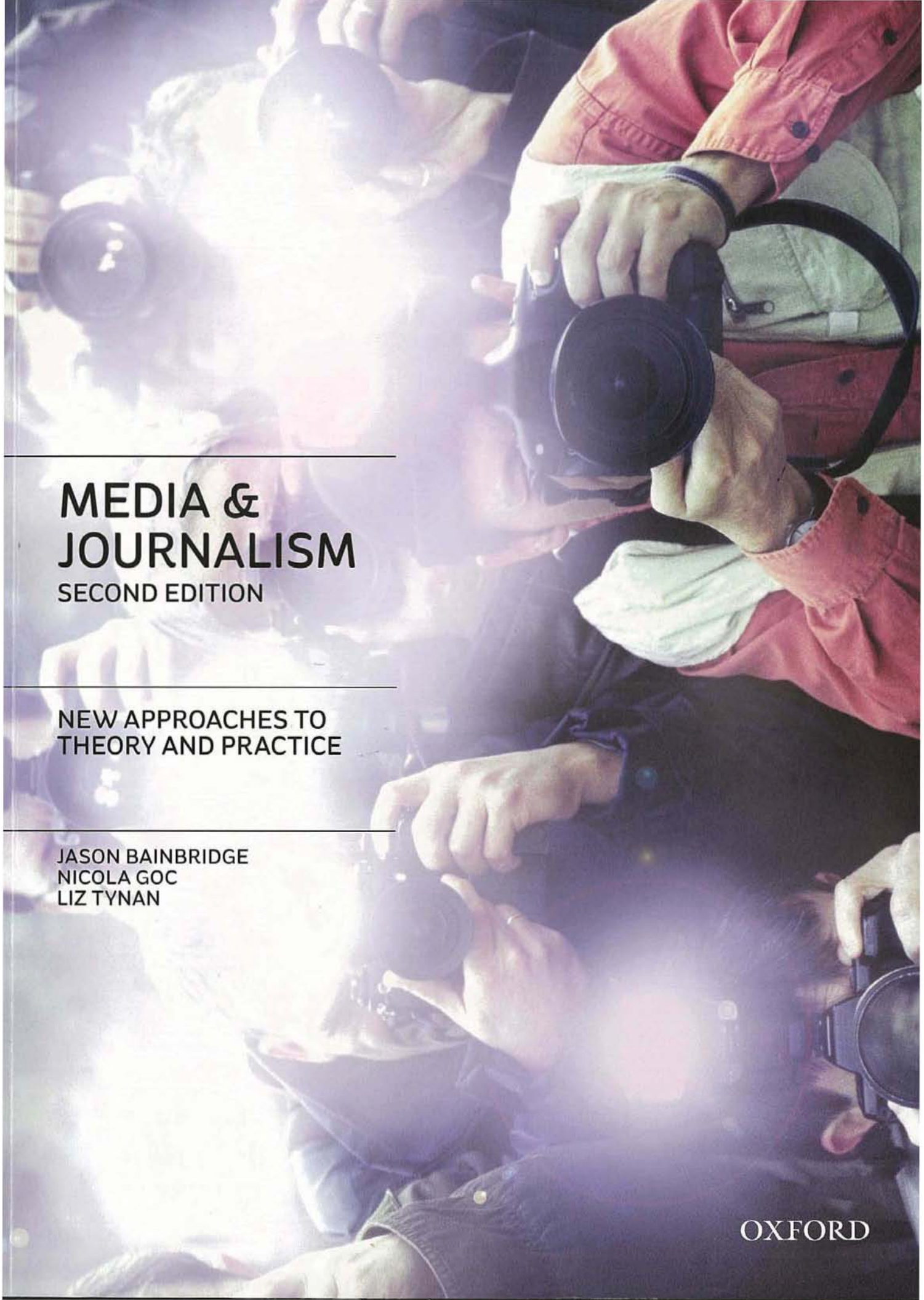

MEDIA & JOURNALISM

SECOND EDITION

NEW APPROACHES TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

JASON BAINBRIDGE
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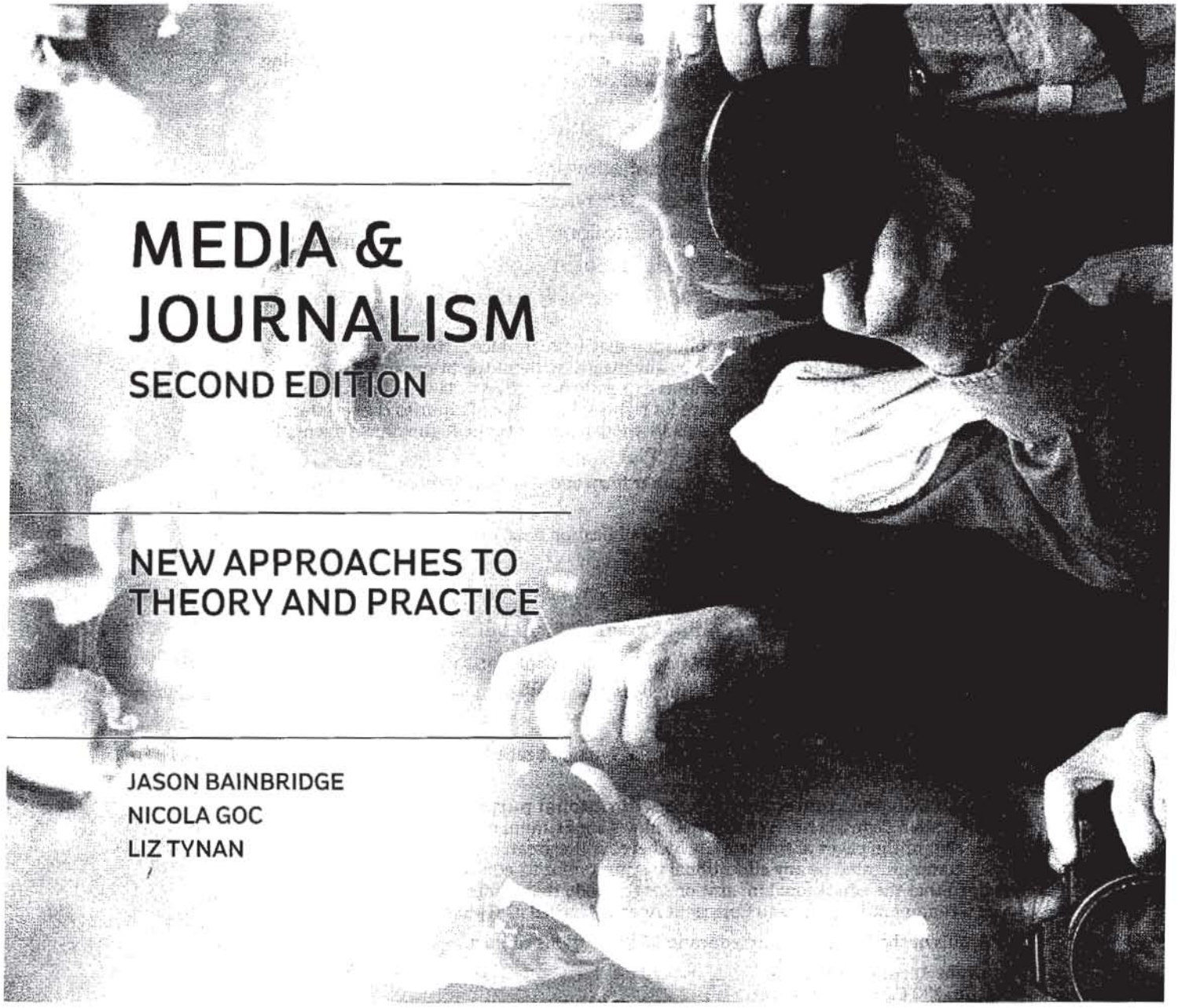

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DEDICATION

From Jason Bainbridge:

To all the media students, colleagues and friends who have contributed directly and indirectly to this book over the years. To my first mentor, teacher and friend—my Dad, Graham Bainbridge—who read the first draft of this book; I wish you could still be here for this second edition. And to you, the person who is reading this acknowledgments page right now. We wrote this for you, regardless of whether you want to be the next Rupert Murdoch, Julian Assange or Oprah Winfrey.

From Nicola Goc:

To the journalists and media workers—present and in the future—who continue to fight for the public's right to know and who have a steadfast commitment to upholding the ideals of the Fourth Estate, I dedicate this book.

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 Uncle Don, who died just as this edition was going to press and who was much loved and will be greatly missed.

FOREWORD

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,* that 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 to have so much choice. Without the intellectual tools—including a language—for critical reflection on 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 such 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 media and journalism you hope to be.

Anne Dunn
Associate Professor
University of Sydney

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.

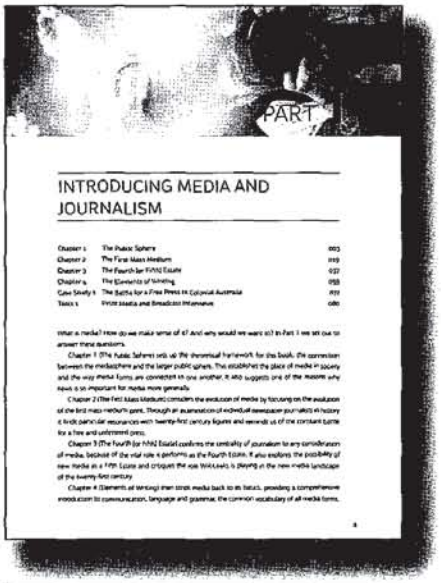
It's a war out there. But as someone with a foot in both camps, I think it's a shame, because it's clear that the two sides have a lot in common, and that each has a lot to learn from the other. As popular media writers, we could do with understanding the history of our professions, and thinking self-reflexively 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 to you.

Alan McKee
Professor
Queensland University
of Technology

CONTENTS

GUIDED TOUR

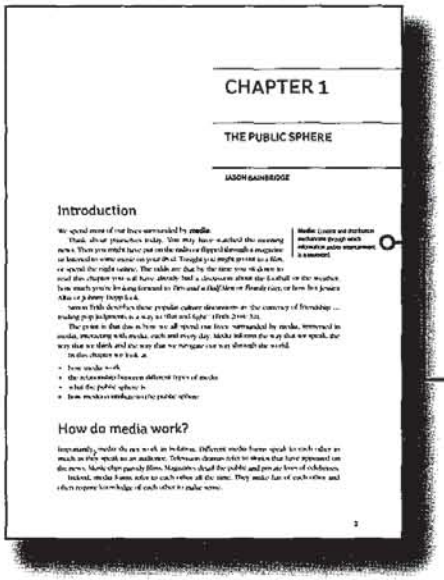


Online resources

There are additional resources online to help you get the most from this text at <www.oup.com.au/orc/mediajournalism2e>.

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 a 'Tool'. At the start of each part, an overview surveys the themes and content of the section, so you can quickly see what the part includes.

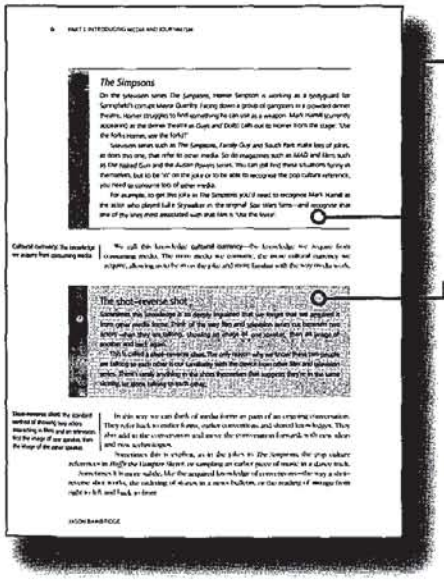


Chapters

At the start of each chapter you will find a brief introduction to the chapter topic and a dot-point list describing 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 that chapter.

Glossary margin notes

Essential terminology is defined in the margins for quick and easy reference.

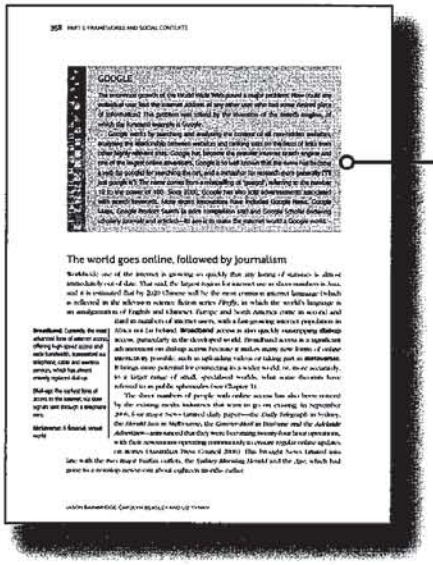


Visual Icons

These boxes give you information about something that you can see yourself–for example, in film or television.

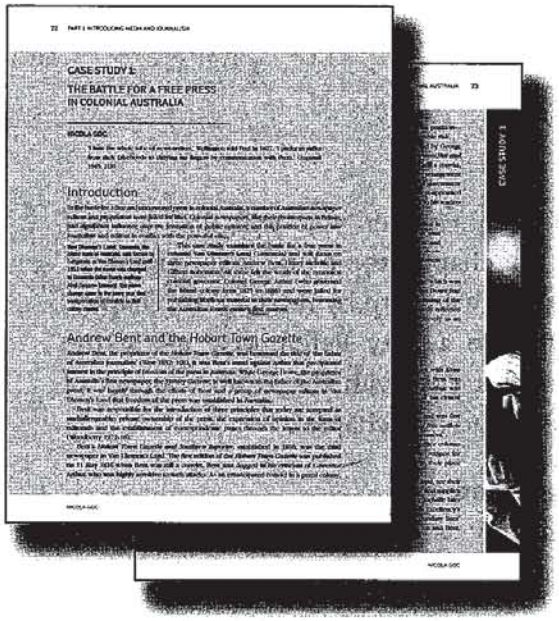
Shaded Boxes

Interesting sidelines and illustrative examples are dotted throughout the chapters in shaded boxes. These provide more detailed information to flesh out the ideas being discussed, or simply to provide some fascinating tidbits along the journey.



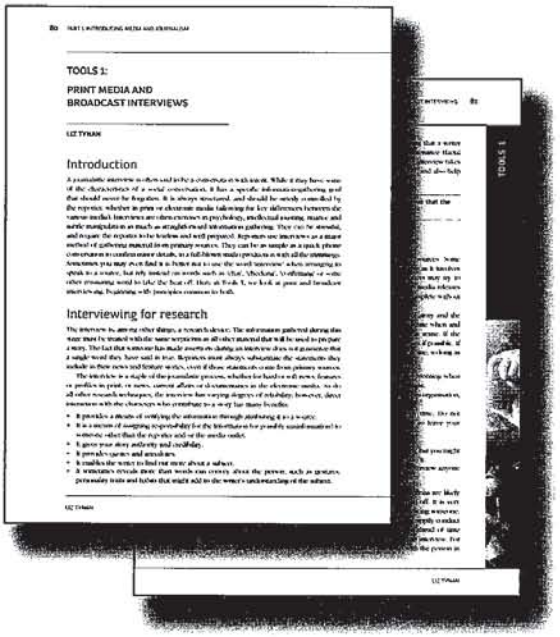
Digital Icons

These boxes give you information about the digital media environment.



Case Studies

These are focused examples designed to illustrate how the concepts found in the chapters play out in real life. They provide specific detail about practical examples of key ideas in media and journalism studies. These will give you insights that will make the theory you encounter clearer.



Tools

These are practical how-to guides that show you how to master a particular technique or apply practical skills in the media and journalism arena. The tools in this book will help you to develop practical knowledge so that you can work in journalism and media.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jason Bainbridge is Senior Lecturer and Discipline Head of Media Studies at Swinburne University of Technology. He has published widely on media representation, law and popular culture, merchandising and the changing nature of news reporting. Jason has also taught journalism and media studies in Hobart and Brisbane. He has appeared as a media commentator on ABC radio and television and is currently working on a book on movie franchises.

Nicola Goc is a Senior Lecturer and Coordinator of the Journalism, Media and Communications Program 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 is the author of several social history books and has also published widely on the representation of the 'deviant' woman in the media. Her current project is a study of snapshot photography and the representation of the female sense of self.

Liz Tynan is a lecturer at the JCU Graduate Research School in Townsville, teaching academic writing and critical thinking skills to postgraduate students. She is a former journalism academic with 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*. She first joined academia in 1997 when she began work in the Journalism program at James Cook University (JCU). She also worked for five years at the University of Tasmania, where she helped set up a community radio station (Edge Radio), before returning for a second stint in the JCU journalism program.

Tim Dwyer is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Media and Communication at the University of Sydney. He teaches media law and ethics, and his research focuses on the critical evaluation of media and communications industries, regulation and policy. In 2007, Oxford University Press published his co-edited book (with Virginia Nightingale) *New Media Worlds: Challenges for Convergence*. His book *Media Convergence* was published by McGraw-Hill/Open University Press in 2010. His new book, *Legal and Ethical Issues in the Media*, is to be published by Palgrave-Macmillan in 2012.

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.

Carolyn Beasley is a Lecturer in Writing at Swinburne University of Technology in Victoria, where she teaches Journalism and Electronic Writing in Swinburne's Master of Arts in Writing program. She has worked as a journalist and has won awards for her fiction as well as for her teaching.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Jason Bainbridge A special thanks, first and foremost, to all of my students and colleagues, past and present, at Swinburne University of Technology and the University of Tasmania for their help in shaping, contributing to and workshopping this material, particularly Kerry Tucker. It would be a much shorter and less entertaining book without them. Thanks also to Frances Bonner, Graeme Turner and Alan McKee for initially inspiring me, Alan for his foreword, and Sarah Gillman and Carolyn Beasley for their contributions. Thanks to the team at Oxford University Press who oversaw this project through to completion: Lucy McLoughlin, Karen Hildebrandt, Jessica Hambridge and Natalie Davall for their unflagging support and encouragement, and Pete Cruttenden for his copy editing of the book. A very big thank you to my co-authors, Nicola Goc and Liz Tynan, for their belief that a book on media and journalism would work and was needed, and for all their wonderful work in the chapters that follow. To paraphrase E. B. White, it is not often that someone comes along who is a true friend and a good writer. Nicola and Liz are both, and it has been a pleasure working with them. And finally, to my Mum Pamela and my partner Xandy, who support and sustain me in ways that words have yet to describe.

Liz Tynan I would like to acknowledge my current and former colleagues in Canberra, Hobart and Townsville who have always given me much to think about and many enjoyable interludes discussing ideas and pursuing language pedantry. In particular I would like to mention Sylvia Kelso, Rosemary Dunn and Annie Warburton, magnificent women all. I would also like to acknowledge Helene Marsh, Dean of the Graduate Research School at James Cook University where I work. Her leadership is inspirational to me. I cannot begin to describe the professional and personal fulfilment I have derived from working with Nicola Goc and Jason Bainbridge, first at the University of Tasmania and later in collaboration on this book. They are fine academics and, even more to the point, fine people. To my family and friends, thanks for your support. In particular I would like to mention Mum (Rosemary), Dad (Frank), Inta, Meredith, Sophie, Andrew and Narelle for all the love you have sent my way. And to Brett, thank you for creating our lovely ecohouse in the tropics, a true sanctuary even when the cyclones blow in. I would also like to acknowledge the Oxford University Press team, in particular Karen Hildebrandt and Jessica Hambridge for their publishing nous and friendly efficiency. I would also like to thank Pete Cruttenden for his superb copy editing.

Nicola Goc The genesis for this book was discussions in the corridors and tearooms of the University of Tasmania between myself, 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 second edition of this book and for their friendship. I also wish to thank the editorial staff at Oxford University Press for their belief in this book and special thanks to our editor, Pete Cruttenden. Finally, I give my heartfelt thanks to my family.

INTRODUCTION

Why a 2.0 edition?

In the short few years between the first edition of this book and the 2.0 edition you are now holding, much has changed and much has stayed the same. 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 case you missed it, thanks to digital technology, media themselves have been upgraded. This is Media 2.0 and to help you around we have created this 2.0 edition.

Media 2.0 refers to the increasing prevalence of user generated content (UGC), which basically means that for the first time in history anyone reading this book can produce their own media. Indeed, if you have a Facebook page, or tweeted, or blogged, or ever uploaded anything to YouTube, you already have. While it's dangerous to provide a starting point for Media 2.0 (its arguably more of an evolution than a particular point in time) it most arguably crystallised around the terrorist attacks of September 11, where the full potential of internet technologies for surveillance and resistance (protest and alternative forms of journalism) was realised. Now Media 2.0 is commonplace. Popular cultural products, such as BBC's *Doctor Who*, incorporates web content, games, downloads and DVD extras into its distribution and fans of the original series (Russell T. Davis and Steven Moffat) now produce and write it; the consumers have become producers. News programs too, such as ABC's *Q&A*, incorporate Twitter and Skype into their structure, creating a live, interactive audience no longer bound by a studio.

More broadly we are bearing witness to a series of profound changes as a result of this upgrade—to the rise of social media and its increasing importance in times of crisis; to the startling eruption of WikiLeaks; to democracy and demonstrations sweeping across the Middle East, aided by Facebook and Twitter; to rolling coverage of a series of natural disasters, each worse than the one that preceded it; to the all-pervasive nature of digital technology and the (voluntary) erosion of privacy; to the celebrity of Lady Gaga and Justin Bieber; to the proliferation of free-to-air digital television channels; to the success of 3D cinema. All these and many other manifestations of this awesome Media 2.0 paradigm shift are there to be seen, experienced, debated and assimilated. It is the era of Media 2.0 and this 2.0 edition will reflect the seismic changes now underway while emphasising the timeless skills and knowledge bases that set the high quality media and journalism practitioner apart from the dabbler or the hack.

To an extent, this book is based on David Gauntlett's idea of Media Studies 2.0 in the sense that we view you all as empowered users (rather than passive consumers) 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. When we talk about television, have a look at what is currently on your

television. Listen to music on your iPod. Tweet. Flip through the pages of your magazines. 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. Any 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, 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 2.0 edition we have sought to be just as inclusive, recognising the broad and encompassing nature of so many media and communication professions. So *Media and Journalism 2.0* will be suitable for anyone interested in media and journalism and the relationship between them, particularly:

- 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
- those 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.

Why 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 twenty-first 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. 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, to the ethical and legal frameworks within which media and journalism operate, 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, which demonstrates some of these theories in practice and a tools section, which offers practical training relevant to each area, through which you can engage with these theories yourselves, and you can put theory into practice. Furthermore, each chapter, case study and tools section is 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 to be negotiated, debated and exchanged. From there we follow how these ideas are disseminated

and commodified (by the media industries), analysed and constructed (through media analysis and journalistic writing), framed and discussed (through ethical and legal frameworks) and, finally, contextualised and debated (through new media, 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*, 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; 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 will break down these media forms further into *media texts*, *signs* and *signifiers/signifieds*, all of which will be defined in their appropriate chapters (look out for the handy definitions in the book's margins).
- Only rarely we will 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 *new 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), 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 becoming increasingly 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 16 and 17.

- The distinction between old and new media will also be made in Chapter 16, 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 new 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).

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. (MEAA/AJA Code of Ethics)

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 frontline 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 twenty-first 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, or they may work 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 (for definitions, 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 Case Study 5, Part 4 and 6 and Tool 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.

As Australian political journalist, Annabel Crabb, who now writes online for *The Drum*, the ABC's comment and analysis portal, says the loss of control for journalists in the new media environment is about the loss of centrality.

> We are—belatedly, and for reasons entirely unassociated with Government-led deregulation or any of the other usual reasons—contestable. The community of news and commentary is getting stronger and more populous. We are just not necessarily, automatically at the core of it any more. And we are open to criticism—some of it savage, some of it worryingly accurate—like never before. (Crabb 2010)

The death of the business model for journalism in old media and the failure to find a sustainable business model in the online environment threatens the future of professional journalism. Old media, in the rush to engage with their audiences in the new online environment, established online sites in the first decade of the twenty-first century where they posted their breaking news and new content. They let the genie out of the bottle and when, at the end of the first decade of the century, they began trying to charge for this content, audiences rightfully objected. As Crabb rather colourfully puts it:

> Having put the cart before the horse in the first instance, it seems that newspapers often make the same mistake again in trying to get out of the mess. Trying to work out how to charge for the content before working out how you make the content worth charging for. Sounds like we're hitching our horse right back up to the arse end of the cart again. There is such a panic on about how to make money that the larger questions—How will we be relevant? How can we be useful?—often are overlooked.

Crabb argues that the only way forward is to offer something new, something worth paying for.

> Apps for mobile and tablet devices are the obvious vehicle, but it's no good just dumping the copy from the newspaper on some cigarette-packet-sized mega-computer and holding out your hand.

And she says the sheer volume of information on the Web could be the opportunity for journalism:

> There is a market in making sense of things. The problem for the hungry online consumer has become, with vertiginous speed, not 'Where can I find news?' but 'How do I hack my way through all this stuff to find what I want?' (Crabb 2010)

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 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 TV 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? Bloggers 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—and scrutinise those in power and who search, disclose, record, question and entertain can be regarded as web journalists, whether they are paid professionals or citizen journalists—are called J-bloggers (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, are providing the oxygen of twenty-first century democracy.

What is public relations (PR)?

Public relations is the promotion of a product, idea, event or person with the intention of creating goodwill for it. Public relations can be many different things, some not necessarily closely connected with marketing. 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 nongovernment 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. It 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.

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.'

- 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 fruitful 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 15 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 for over a decade. 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 and Sternberg 1999; Windschuttle 2000; Flew et al. 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 twenty-first 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 18).

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 the 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 2.0 edition of *Media and Journalism.* We hope you learn a lot and we hope you have some fun while doing it.