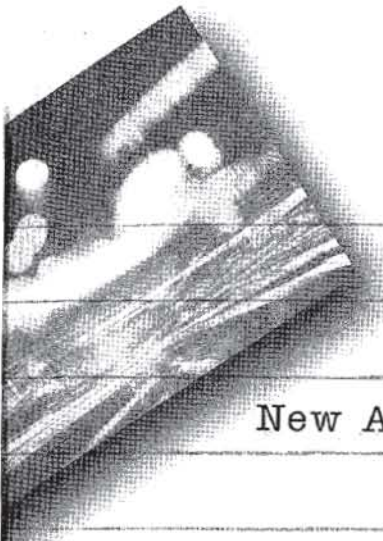


# MEDIA & JOURNALISM

NEW APPROACHES  
TO THEORY & PRACTICE

Jason Bainbridge  
Nicola Goc  
Liz Tynan

OXFORD



# Media and Journalism

New Approaches to Theory and Practice

Jason Bainbridge,  
Nicola Goc and  
Liz Tynan

CONTRIBUTORS:

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AND SARAH GILLMAN

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# Dedication

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*From Jason Bainbridge:*

For my Dad, Graham Bainbridge, my first teacher, mentor and friend. You read the first draft of this book, I wish you could still be here to see it completed.

*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.

*From Nicola Goc:*

To the journalists and media workers of the future and to my friend and colleague Wayne Crawford, who has dedicated his life to upholding the ideals of the fourth estate.

---

# Foreword

---

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, and from Habermas to Lindsay Lohan. I haven't seen a book like 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

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# Guided tour



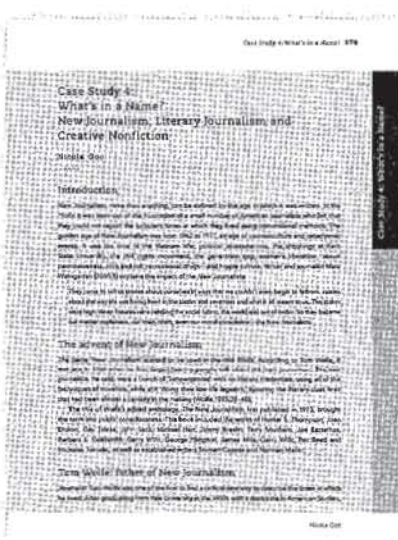
## The overall structure

This book is divided into six 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 the content of the part.



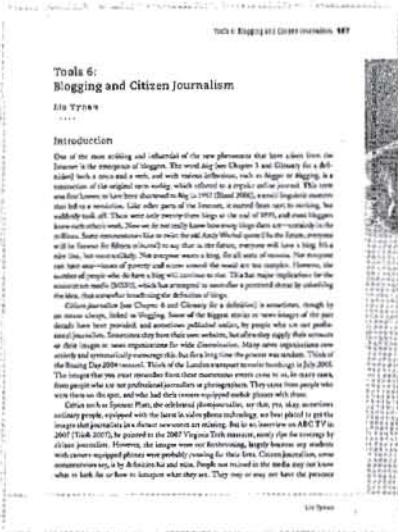
## Chapters

At the start of each chapter you will find a brief introduction to the chapter topic, and a dot-point list telling you 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. Chapters give you broad context for the themes of this textbook and show you, in a step-by-step way, why the topic of the chapter is important in journalism and media studies.



## 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 that gives a practical example of key ideas in media and journalism studies. These will give you some insights that will make the theory you encounter clearer.



### Tools

'Tools' 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.

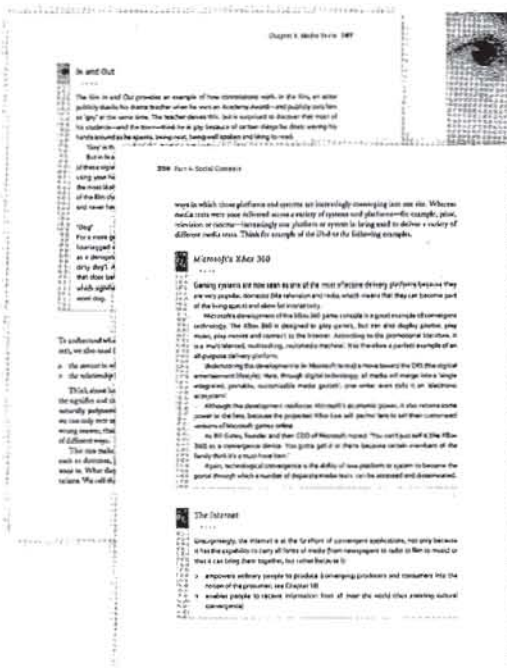


### Glossary margin notes

Essential terminology is defined in the margins for quick and easy reference and so you are never confused by jargon.

### 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 just simply provide some fascinating tidbits along the journey.



### Visual icons

When you see the 'eye' icon, you will find out about something you can see for yourself, for example in a film or on television.



### Digital icons

When you see the '01' icon, you will find information specifically relating to the digital environment.

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# Contributors

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**Jason Bainbridge** is a lecturer in Journalism, Media and Communications at the University of Tasmania.

**Sarah Gillman** has worked in the Australian media for more than three decades, including work as a political and legal reporter, news editor, producer and researcher, broadcaster and freelance journalist. Most of her career has been with ABC radio and television, although she has also worked in commercial radio and in newspapers. Sarah has also taught journalism and media studies in tertiary institutions in Canberra, Darwin and Hobart. She is currently undertaking postgraduate research into victims and the media.

**Nicola Goc** is a 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 historian. She is the author of several social history books and has also published widely on the representation of women in the media. She is currently working on a book on the media's representation of 'deviant' mothers.

**Elizabeth Hart** worked in regional press for ten years as a journalist and subeditor. In 1998 her editorial column won the Country Press Association Shakespeare Award for Excellence in Editorial Writing. She is currently completing a PhD on the education and training of regional and rural press journalists. Elizabeth taught nonfiction writing and editing at TAFE and lectured in journalism at James Cook University before moving to Monash in 2001, where she taught news feature writing, media law, and journalism ethics until 2007.

**Liz Tynan** is a former journalism academic with a background in both print and electronic media, and a long-standing specialty 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 another stint in the JCU journalism program. After teaching journalism and public relations for more than ten years at the University of Tasmania and JCU, she recently returned to science writing, joining the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) as senior writer.

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**Jason Bainbridge:** A special thanks, first and foremost, to all of my students and colleagues in the Journalism, Media and Communication stream at the University of Tasmania, past and present, for their help in shaping, contributing to and workshopping this material. 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 Elizabeth Hart for their contributions.

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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.

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From all of us, a special thank you to Tim Dwyer for his generous advice and assistance.

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# Introduction

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Hello and welcome to the book. We call it MAJ for short.

Best case scenario: you have just purchased MAJ, cracked the spine and are wondering how to get the most out of it.

Worst case scenario: you are currently reading MAJ in the bookshop or the library and are wondering if it is worth the money, or the late fees, or the time it will take just to flip through the pages ...

Even worse case scenario: You saw MAJ on the shelf and are now laughing to yourself over why anyone would need *another* book on media or journalism ...

Either way, you want to know what the book is about and whether it will be of interest to you.

## Who is the book 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 fun as well.

## 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 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 six 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, both now and into the future—providing a complete handbook of the mediasphere. You can therefore follow the flow of information and ideas from news production through to dissemination and negotiation, revealing how important media and journalism studies are to each other.

Each part is divided into *chapters* addressing the major areas of study, introducing 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.

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 which can be considered in relation to other media products, such as TV dramas, films and soap operas.

You may notice that while there are lots of references to other media in this book there are relatively few pictures. This is because we want to encourage 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 TV. Listen to music on your iPod. Flip through the pages of your magazines. We want this to be a truly immersive experience 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 a site like YouTube.

## What do we mean by *media*?

**Media:** content and distribution mechanisms through which information and/or entertainment is transmitted.

For this book we define **media** as content and distribution mechanisms through which information and/or entertainment is transmitted. They can be publicly or privately owned, develop 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 (see also Chapter 10).
- 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 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 television, a newspaper 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 these media forms down 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).
- ▮ We will only rarely 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 (see Chapter 10). Second, the era of the mass media is currently in a state of flux, because of the rapid development and implementation of *new media* (a term that we will define later, but which encompasses the Internet, computer 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, 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 to a wide audience about current events, trends, issues and people. 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.

**Media practitioner:** any person involved in the production of media.

**Journalism:** the gathering and dissemination of new information to a wide audience about current events, trends, issues and people.



- ▀ 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?

**Journalist:** a person who practises journalism; someone who gathers and disseminates new information to a wider audience about current events, trends, people and issues.

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 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 TV 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. 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)

**Code of ethics:** a set of rules prescribing the ethical practices that all members of a profession should follow.

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 which should have in place checks and balances ensuring their journalism is balanced, fair and accurate.

## News journalists

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 allows 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 as fully informed citizens in the democratic process.

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.

## Soft news

Soft news is generally defined as news that does not have a high priority in the news values scale, encompassing 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* (also see 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.

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Recently 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.'

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▮ 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.

**Tabloid:** in a literal sense, a type of newspaper that is smaller and easier to read than a broadsheet paper. The term also refers to the guiding philosophy of many smaller mass market newspapers, which are often more likely to carry sensational news in an informal 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.

▮ 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 (CCJ).

## J-bloggers

Are bloggers journalists? The Internet allows 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 invented the term, argues that J-bloggers, working within new media, have reclaimed some of the old traditions of a free and independent press, reporting without fear or favour. They have brought

**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 invented by Nicola Goc.

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 (PR):** the promotion of a product, event or person with the intention to create goodwill for it.

**Public relations** is the promotion of a product, idea, event or person with the intention to create 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 PR 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 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 PR practitioners in positive and fruitful ways.
- Mutual mistrust between PR 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 PR, and suggests ways through the ethical minefields.
- Tools 2 provides tips on how PR practitioners can optimise the material that they send to the media.

## 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 gate-

keeping, 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 a micro, mid and macro level, 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 tended 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?

This question has been at the centre of a debate between journalists and media academics for over a decade in Australia; 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 into 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 learn 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.

**Theory:** the body of rules, ideas, principles and techniques that apply to a particular subject, as distinct from actual practice.

We hope you enjoy the book. We hope you learn a lot and we hope you have some fun while doing it.

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