The Media & COMMUNICATIONS IN AUSTRALIA

4TH EDITION

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Stuart Cunningham

EDITED BY *Sue Turnbull* &

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Abbreviations and acronyms

AANA	Australian Association of National Advertisers
AAP	Australian Associated Press
AARNET	Australian Academic Research Network
ABA	Australian Broadcasting Authority
ABAF	Australian Business Arts Foundation
ABC	Audit Bureau of Circulation
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation (previously Commission)
ABCB	Australian Broadcasting Control Board
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ABT	Australian Broadcasting Tribunal
ACA	Australian Consumers' Association
ACC	Australian Copyright Council
ACCAN	Australian Communications Consumer Action Network
ACCC	Australian Competition and Consumer Commission
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACP	Australian Consolidated Press
ACTF	Australian Children's Television Foundation
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
ADB	Anti-Discrimination Board (New South Wales)
ADSL	asymmetrical digital subscriber line
AFA	Advertising Federation of Australia
AFACT	Australian Federation Against Copyright Theft
AFC	Australian Film Commission
AFDC	Australian Film Development Corporation
AFI	Australian Film Institute
AFTRS	Australian Film, Television and Radio School

AHA	Australian Hotels Association
AI	artificial intelligence
AIIA	Australian Information Industry Association
AIM	Australian information media
AIMIA	Australian Interactive Multimedia Industry Association
AIRLA	Australian Independent Record Labels Association
AJA	Australian Journalists' Association
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
AM	amplitude modulation
AMCOS	Australasian Mechanical Copyright Owners' Society
AMPAL	Australian Music Publishers' Association Limited
AMTA	Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association
ANT	actor network theory
ANZCA	Australia and New Zealand Communication Association
AOL	America On Line
AOTC	Australian and Overseas Telecommunications Corporation
APA	American Psychological Association
APC	Australian Press Council
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APRA	Australasian Performing Right Association
ARA	Australian Recording Association
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARC CoE	Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence
ARIA	Australian Record Industry Association
ARL	Australian Rugby League
ARN	Australian Radio Network
ARPA	Advanced Research Project Agency
ARPU	average revenue and price per user
ARPANET	Advanced Research Project Agency Network
ASC	Australian Sports Commission
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ASTRA	Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
ATR	advanced television research
AT&T	American Telephone and Telegraph
auDa.au	Domain Administration Ltd
AUSFTA	Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement

AWA	Amalgamated Wireless Company of Australia
AWW	*Australian Women's Weekly*
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BBS	bulletin board services
BMG	Bertlesmann Music Group
BRACS	Broadcasting for Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme
BSA	*Broadcasting Services Act 1992*
BSEG	Broadband Services Expert Group
BTCE	Bureau of Transport and Communications Economics
CAD	computer-aided design
CAAMA	Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association
CBAA	Community Broadcasting Association of Australia
CBF	Community Broadcasting Foundation
CCCS	Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CD	compact disc
CDMA	code division multiple access
CD-ROM	compact disc read-only memory
CE-HTML	consumer electronics hypertext markup language
CER	closer economic relations
CGI	computer-generated imagery
CLC	Communications Law Centre
CNN	Cable News Network
CRA	Commercial Radio Australia
CSE	content service enterprise
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CTN	Consumers' Telecommunications Network
DAB	Digital Audio Broadcasting
DARPA	Defence Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency
DBCDE	Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy
DCITA	Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts
DIY	do-it-yourself
DOTAC	Department of Transport and Communications
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DSB	digital sound broadcasting
DV	digital video
DVB-T	digital video broadcasting—terrestrial

DVD	digital video disc
EFTF	Experimental Film and Television Fund
EPL	England Premier League
ESA	Entertainment Software Association
EU	European Union
EULA	end-user licence agreement
FACTS	Federation of Australian Commercial Television Stations
FARB	Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters
FCC	Federal Communications Commission (US)
FFC	Film Finance Corporation
FLICS	film licensed investment companies
FM	frequency modulation
FMCG	fast-moving consumer goods
FPC	Federal Publishing Company
FTA	free trade agreement
FTTH/FTTP	fibre to the home/premises
FTTN/FTTC	fibre to the node/curb
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GIS	geographic information system
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSM	global system for mobiles (European standard)
GST	goods and services tax
HbbTV	hybrid broadcast broadband TV
HBO	Home Box Office
HDTV	high-definition television
HFC	hybrid fibre-coaxial
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
HTML	hypertext markup language
ICANN	Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers
IEAA	Interactive Entertainment Association of Australia
IFPI	International Federation of the Phonographic Industry
IGDA	International Game Developers Association
IIA	Internet Industry Association
IM	instant messaging
IRC	internet relay chat
ISOC	Internet Society of Australia

ISP	internet service provider
ITN	independent television network
ITU	International Telecommunications Union
iTV	interactive TV
LBS	location-based service
LTE	long-term evolution (services)
MCA	Media Council of Australia
MDS	multi-point distribution system
MEAA	Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance
MEAP	mobile enterprise application platform
MERCOSUR	South American group of Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay
MIA	Media International Australia
MMOG	massively multi-player online game
MMORPG	massively multi-player online role-playing game
MMS	multimedia messaging services
MPA	Magazine Publishers of Australia
MPDAA	Motion Pictures Distributors' Association of Australia
MTV	Music Television
MUD	multi-user dungeon
MOO	MUDs object-oriented
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NES	Nintendo Entertainment System
NBN	National Broadband Network
NGO	non-government organisation
NIMAA	National Indigenous Media Association of Australia
NIM	newspaper-inserted magazine
NIRS	National Indigenous Radio Service
NREN	National Research and Education Network
NRP	National Radio Plan
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OIPC	Office of the Australian Information Commissioner
OTC	Overseas Telecommunications Commission
p2p	peer to peer
PBL	Publishing and Broadcasting Limited
PBS	Public Broadcasting Service
PDV	post-production digital and video
POTS	plain old telephone system
PPCA	Phonographic Performance Company of Australia

PRIA	Public Relations Institute of Australia
PSA	Prices Surveillance Authority
PSP	Playstation Portable (Sony)
PSX	Playstation X
RCIADIC	Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody
RIAA	Recording Industry Association of America
RSS	really simple syndication
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SCOT	social construction of technology
SDTV	standard definition television
SLAM	Save Live Australian Music
SMS	short message service
SST	social shaping of technology
STS	science and technology studies
TCP/IP	transmission control protocol/internet protocol
TIO	Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman
TOS	terms of service
TMRC	Tech Model Railway Club
TPC	Trade Practices Commission
TPG	Total Peripherals Group
TVC	television commercial
UCC	user-created content
UHF	ultra-high frequency
UNSW	University of New South Wales
USO	universal service obligation
VCR	video cassette recorder
VCS	video computer system
VES	video entertainment system
VHA	Vodafone Hutchison Australia
VHF	very-high frequency
VIDA	Video Industry Distributors of Australia
VOIP	voice over internet protocol
VPN	virtual private network
VRF	Victoria Rock Foundation
WAP	wireless access protocol
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organisation
WoW	World of Warcraft
WTO	World Trade Organization

About the authors

JOHN BANKS is a Senior Lecturer, Head of Postgraduate Coursework Studies and researcher in the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology. He researches and publishes on co-creativity, innovation and social media in the creative industries, especially video games and interactive entertainment. He has a special interest in organisational and workplace culture. His past decade of research on the topic of co-creativity in the video games industry culminated in the recently published book *Co-creating Videogames* (2013). Recent publications include *Key Concepts in Creative Industries* (with John Hartley, Jason Potts, Stuart Cunningham, Terry Flew and Michael Keane, 2013).

FRANCES BONNER is a Reader in Television and Popular Culture in the School of English, Media Studies and Art History at the University of Queensland. She is the author of *Personality Presenters: Television's Intermediaries with Viewers* (2011), *Ordinary Television* (2003) and a co-author (with Graeme Turner and P. David Marshall) of *Fame Games: The Production of Celebrity in Australia* (2000). Her research interests are in non-fiction television, its programs, presenters and formats, magazines and celebrity.

KATE BOWLES researches and teaches the social history of Australian cinema attendance and public space media practices at the University of Wollongong. She is part of a long-running ARC-funded research team investigating the history of cinema distribution and exhibition in Australia, currently led by Professor Deb Verhoeven, and co-teaches an annual online undergraduate seminar class in the US reception of Australian film and television content with Professor Janna Jones at Northern Arizona University. She is also the Head of Learning Design at the University of Wollongong.

AXEL BRUNS is an Associate Professor in the Creative Industries Faculty at Queensland University of Technology and a Chief Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation. He is the author of *Blogs, Wikipedia, Second Life and*

Beyond: From Production to Produsage (2008) and *Gatewatching: Collaborative Online News Production* (2005), and a co-editor of *Twitter and Society* (2013), *A Companion to New Media Dynamics* (2012) and *Uses of Blogs* (2006). Axel is an expert on the impact of user-led content creation, or produsage, and his current work focuses on the study of user participation in social media spaces such as Twitter, especially in the context of acute events. His research blog is at <http://snurb.info> and he tweets at @snurb_dot_info. See <http://mappingonlinepublics.net> for more details of his current social media research.

JEAN BURGESS is Associate Professor of Digital Media Studies and Deputy Director of the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation at Queensland University of Technology, where her research focuses on the uses, politics and methodological implications of social and mobile media platforms. Her books are *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*; *Studying Mobile Media*; *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*; and *Twitter and Society*. She tweets at @jeanburgess.

MAUREEN BURNS is a Lecturer in Cultural and Media Studies at the University of Queensland. Her interests are in public service broadcasting in a globalised media environment and online services. Publications include *ABC Online: Becoming the ABC* (2008) and many articles on public service broadcasting.

STUART CUNNINGHAM is Distinguished Professor of Media and Communications, Queensland University of Technology and Director of the Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation. His most recent books are *Digital Disruption: Cinema Moves Online* (edited with Dina Iordanova, 2012), *Key Concepts in Creative Industries* (with John Hartley, Jason Potts, Terry Flew, John Banks and Michael Keane, 2013), *Hidden Innovation: Policy, Industry and the Creative Sector* (2013) and *Screen Distribution and the New King Kongs of the Online World* (with Jon Silver, 2013).

TANJA DREHER is a Lecturer in Media and Communications, specialising in international communications, and media and multiculturalism. Her research focuses on the politics of listening in the context of media and multiculturalism, Indigenous sovereignties and feminisms and anti-racism. She is a co-convenor of The Listening Project, exploring the practices, technologies and politics of listening as political practice. Her previous research has focused on news and cultural diversity, community media interventions, experiences of racism and the development of community anti-racism strategies after September 11, 2001.

TERRY FLEW is Professor of Media and Communication at Queensland University of Technology. He is the author of *Global Creative Industries* (2013), *The Creative Industries, Culture and Policy* (2012), *Understanding Global Media* (2007) and *New Media: An Introduction* (4th edition to be published in 2014). He is a co-author of *Key Concepts in Creative Industries* (2013) and editor of *Creative Industries and Urban Development: Creative Cities in the 21st Century* (2012). During 2011–12, he was a Lead Commissioner with the Australian Law Reform Commission, heading the National Classification Scheme Review.

JOCK GIVEN is Professor of Media and Communications at Swinburne University's Institute for Social Research. He was previously Director of the Communications Law Centre and Policy Adviser at the Australian Film Commission.

GERARD GOGGIN is Professor and Chair of the Media and Communications Department at the University of Sydney. His books include *Internationalizing Internet Studies* (with Mark McLelland, 2009), *Mobile Technologies: From Telecommunications to Media* (with Larissa Hjorth, 2009) and *Cell Phone Culture* (2006). He currently leads an ARC research project on Internet History in Australia and the Asia-Pacific, 2010–13.

BEN GOLDSMITH is Senior Research Fellow in the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation. His current research interests include the apps development industry in Australia, the digital creative workforce, media policy and Australian film and television.

BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY is an ARC Queen Elizabeth II Fellow, Professor of Modern History and the Director of the Centre for Media History at Macquarie University. Now editing *A Companion to the Australian Media* (forthcoming 2014), she is the author of *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio* (2009). Her other publications include *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire* (1999; e-book 2012), *Sir Frank Packer* (2000) and *Party Games: Australian Politicians and the Media from War to Dismissal* (2003).

STEPHEN HARRINGTON is a Senior Lecturer in Journalism, Media and Communication at Queensland University of Technology. He is the author of *Australian TV News: New Forms, Functions and Futures* (2013), as well as a number of journal articles and book chapters that examine the socio-political value of entertainment and the changing nature of contemporary journalism.

LARISSA HJORTH is an artist, digital ethnographer and Associate Professor in the Games Program at RMIT University, and co-director of RMIT's Digital Ethnography Research Centre (DERC). Since 2000, Hjorth has been researching the gendered and socio-cultural dimensions of mobile, social, locative and gaming cultures in the Asia-Pacific—these studies are outlined in her books, *Mobile Media in the Asia-Pacific* (2009), *Games & Gaming* (2010), *Online@AsiaPacific: Mobile, Social and Locative in the Asia–Pacific region* (with Michael Arnold, 2013) and *Understanding Social Media* (with Sam Hinton, 2013).

SHANE HOMAN is Associate Professor and Head of Communications and Media at Monash University. His most recent books include *Sounds of Then, Sounds of Now: Popular Music in Australia* (co-edited with Tony Mitchell, 2008) and *Popular Music Industries and the State: Policy Notes* (with Martin Cloonan and Jen Cattermole, 2014). He has recently completed ARC Discovery Grant projects on music policy and popular music and cultural memory, and an Australia Council report on the needs of the recording sector in Australia.

LIBBY LESTER is Professor of Journalism, Media and Communications at the University of Tasmania. Her books include *Media and Environment: Conflict, Politics and the News* (2010), *Transnational Protests and the Media* (co-edited with Simon Cottle, 2011) and *Environmental Conflict and the Media* (co-edited with Brett Hutchins, 2013). Recent articles have appeared in *Media, Culture & Society*, the *International Journal of Communication*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies* and *Media International Australia*. She has been a Visiting Fellow at Oxford University's Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, and is an Associate Editor of the journal *Environmental Communication*. She worked as a newspaper journalist prior to joining the university.

CATHARINE LUMBY is Professor of Media in the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies at Macquarie University. She was the Director of the Journalism and Media Research at the University of New South Wales and the Foundation Chair of the Media and Communications Department at the University of Sydney. She is the author of seven books and numerous book chapters and journal articles. She sits on the Education and Welfare Committee and the Research Committee of the National Rugby League, advising them on gender issues. She is also a member of the Advertising Standards Board. She has been awarded five Australian Research Council grants.

ANTHONY MCCOSKER lectures in media and communications in the Faculty of Life and Social Sciences at Swinburne University. His research explores media affect, digital and visual cultures and social media practices and publics. He is author of

the book *Intensive Media: Aversive Affect and Visual Culture* (2013), and has published a number of book chapters and articles in journals such as *Information, Communication and Society*, *Sexualities*, *Continuum* and *Transformations*.

ALAN MCKEE is an expert on media and healthy sexual development. He leads the Promoting Healthy Sexual Development research group at Queensland University of Technology and is Project Leader for the Queensland government-funded NIRAP grant Developing Improved Sexual Health Education Strategies.

DAVID ROWE is Professor of Cultural Research in the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney. His books include *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity* (2nd edn, 2004); *Global Media Sport: Flows, Forms and Futures* (2011); and *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport* (with Brett Hutchins, 2012). His latest edited works are *Sport, Public Broadcasting, and Cultural Citizenship: Signal Lost?* (with Jay Scherer, 2013) and *Digital Media Sport: Technology, Power and Culture in the Network Society* (with Brett Hutchins, 2013).

JOHN SINCLAIR is an Honorary Professorial Fellow in the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne, researching the history of the advertising industry in Australia. His published work covers various aspects of the internationalisation of the media and communication industries, with a special emphasis on Asia and Latin America. His books include *Advertising, the Media and Globalisation: A World in Motion* (2012), *Latin American Television: A Global View* (1999) and the co-edited (with Anna Cristina Pertierra and Jason Antrosio) *Consumer Culture in Latin America* (2012). He has held visiting professorships at leading universities in Europe and the United States, is on the editorial advisory boards of various international journals and is active in professional organisations.

RODNEY TIFFEN is an Australian Emeritus Professor of Political Science in the Department of Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney. He is co-author (with Ross Gittins) of *How Australia Compares* (2004) and author of *Diplomatic Deceits: Government, Media and East Timor* (2001), *Scandals: Media, Politics and Corruption in Contemporary Australia* (1999), *News and Power* (1990), *The News from Southeast Asia: The Sociology of Newsmaking* (1978) and numerous articles on mass media and Australian politics.

SUE TURNBULL is Professor of Communication and Media Studies at the University of Wollongong. She has published broadly in the fields of media education, audience

and television studies, with particular attention to comedy and crime. Recent publications include, The *Television Crime Drama* (2014) *Remembering Television* (2012) co-edited with Kate Darian-Smith and *Investigating Veronica Mars*: *Essays on the Teen Detective Series* (2011) co-edited with Rhonda Wilcox. Sue is editor of the journal *Media International Australia* and joint editor with Martin Barker of *Participations: The Journal of Audience and Reception Studies*.

GRAEME TURNER is Emeritus Professor in the Centre for Critical and Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland. The author of many works on the media and cultural studies, his most recent publications include (with Anna Cristina Pertierra) *Locating Television: Zones of Consumption* (2013), *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* (2012), *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn* (2010) and (with Jinna Tay) *Television Studies After TV: Understanding Television in the Post-broadcast Era* (2009). His revised second edition of *Understanding Celebrity* will be published in 2013.

DEB VERHOEVEN is Professor and Chair in Media and Communication at Deakin University. She is Deputy Director of the Centre for Memory, Imagination and Invention and Director of the Humanities Network Infrastructure (HuNI) Project. Her current research project, Mapping the Movies: The Changing Nature of Australia's Cinema Circuits and Their Audiences, 1956–1984, is an ARC-funded project with Professor Richard Maltby, Professor Jill Julius Mathews, Associate Professor Colin Arrowsmith, Dr Michael Walsh and Dr Kate Bowles.

ROWAN WILKEN is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communications at Swinburne University of Technology. He holds an ARC-funded research fellowship (an ARC DECRA) in the Swinburne Institute for Social Research. His present research interests include mobile and locative media, digital technologies and culture, theories and practices of everyday life, domestic technology consumption, and old and new media. He is the co-editor (with Gerard Goggin) of *Locative Media* (forthcoming) and *Mobile Technology and Place* (2012) and the author of *Teletechnologies, Place, and Community* (2011).

Preface

Understanding the media and the communications environment has never been simple, and it seems to get more complex every day. For a textbook covering this dynamic field, the task got a little more complex with the decision by co-editor Graeme Turner to step down from this edition. His work on this book, and in numerous other ways, has helped immeasurably in making media and communications studies in Australia what it is today. But the project loses nothing in momentum in replacing Graeme's editorial expertise with that of Sue Turnbull.

This is the fourth edition of *The Media and Communications in Australia*—although it is more accurate to call it the sixth edition of a book that began its life in the early 1990s as *The Media in Australia*. Every time we have brought out a new edition, we have endeavoured to ensure that we captured the fast-paced world of change that is the media in Australia.

In the intervening years since our last edition, the internet has increasingly taken centre stage as it has continued to develop as the major convergent communications platform of the future. Serious experiments in monetising online content—including paywalls for premium news content—are now in train, following on from the global success of Apple in establishing a reasonably secure micro-payment system that has begun to address the 'analogue dollars to digital cents' conundrum. While the pathway forward for entertainment media is marginally clearer, the challenge to secure a future funding base that supports quality journalism remains unresolved and urgent.

Reality television (cooking, home renovation, singing, dancing, personal health and so on) has become such a staple that it has generated concerns about the future of scripted drama, while being hailed as a more egalitarian and accessible media format. Digital television is now in full takeup mode after a slow start, and the stepped switch-off of the analogue TV signal is now happening across Australia. The large majority of households can now receive fifteen free-to-air stations (the 'Free TV' offer jointly promoted by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) and the three commercial networks) and a couple of dozen additional

channels through monopoly pay TV provider Foxtel (or its regional resupplier, Austar). A good deal of this content can be consumed on mobile devices through apps. Meanwhile, digital radio struggles to gain traction.

Blogging, Twitter, Facebook and the use of mobile communications are, at least for the moment, firmly enmeshed in the everyday lives of many—particularly young—people. The increased capacity for interactivity with the current generation of hardware and software, and the development of platforms based almost solely around that capacity—particularly social networking—have given rise to talk of us entering the age of the so-called 'prosumer'. As traditional media such as newspapers and magazines find that the future for single-platform media enterprises is looking bleak, the media and communications industries increasingly are looking to mobile phones, computer games and related interactive multimedia as the key pathways to what the future holds. That said, television viewing is still increasing—even in the United States, where the challenge from the internet is perhaps the strongest. At the same time, the increasing popularity of the long-form drama series available worldwide via download or DVD is changing the ways in which people access and watch television.

All these current critical developments, along with many more, have been covered in this new edition.

It is fitting that we should thank the contributors to this edition for their cooperation and expertise. The quality of their work is a real testament to the strength of the field of media and communications studies in Australia. Elizabeth Weiss of Allen & Unwin has provided us with astute advice and editorial support during the preparation of this edition and Sue Jarvis has done a superb job of copy editing the book. Our most particular thanks, however, must go to Harvey May. He has worked tirelessly and expertly as project manager of what always is a large undertaking, and has made a major contribution to this book. Of course, we bear the editorial responsibility for the final form, and hope that our readers find it a valuable guide to their study and broader understanding of the media and communications in Australia.

Stuart Cunningham and Sue Turnbull

Introduction:

THE MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS TODAY

STUART CUNNINGHAM AND SUSAN TURNBULL

WHAT *ARE* THE MEDIA TODAY?

The aim of this book is to help students to understand the contemporary media and communications environment. It provides ways of thinking about a range of new platforms of delivery, modes of consumption and industrial structures, as well as about the structure and function of traditional print and broadcast media and communications. Its orientation reflects the fact that the changed nature of the media and communications environment in recent years has been so substantial as to provoke us to ask the question in our sub-heading above: what *are* the media today? Implicit in that question is the proposition that to continue to think of the media only through the traditional distinctions between electronic (television and radio) and print (newspapers and magazines) media, and between these and telecommunications (fixed and mobile phone) is no longer sufficient. The near-ubiquity of information-based systems of delivery, such as computers in the home, the introduction of digital technologies of production and distribution in broadcasting and the cinema, the globalisation of media and communications markets, the growing convergence of broadcasting, information services and telecommunications, and the challenges to

established media posed by the explosion of Web 2.0 services and social media have all contributed to the formation of a highly volatile and greatly altered media landscape. What distinguishes the situation today from that of only a few years ago is that now every sector of the media is affected by these challenges and is responding to them. Much of what constitutes the so-called 'new' media and their influence is no longer new, while at the same time wholly new sectors—such as apps—have developed in the last few years. That said, it is also important to recognise that this situation is most pronounced in those countries with highly developed media systems, and that the majority of the world's population still does not have access to these new media platforms. Nonetheless, where they exist, the influence of the new media platforms has been profound.

Of course, there is still much for media and communications studies to understand about the traditional or 'old' media forms, and media history tells us that changes in technologies do not necessarily result in the displacement of an older media form by the new arrivals. Understanding what is currently happening in the media depends upon our nuanced understanding of what has happened in the past. In Australia, the cinema, the press and television continue to attract strong academic interest, but significant gaps remain in their history and analysis—as is revealed, for example, in the collection of essays on the coming of television to Australia, *Remembering Television* (Darian-Smith and Turnbull 2012). New comprehensive histories of commercial television (Nick Herd's *Networking: Commercial Television in Australia*, 2012) and commercial radio (Bridget Griffen-Foley's *Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio*, 2009) add greatly to the stock of media history, although advertising, popular music and mass-market magazines await their general historians. A major *Companion to the Australian Media* (edited by Bridget Griffen-Foley, to be published in 2014) promises to perform a significant reference function for our field.

Further progress is being made in many areas. The need to examine the role of marketing and public relations strategies in generating media content has recently been built into media studies. As a consequence of a broader view of the media and communications industries, scholars in the field have begun to recognise the telecommunications industry for what it patently is: a crucial component of the infrastructure of the information society. Where once telecommunications was left to the engineers and the business pages of the newspapers, while media studies people tuned to their favourite television programs, such a division of the field is no longer tenable. The extraordinary cultural and commercial impact of the mobile phone (discussed in Chapter 14) has been among the most dramatic provocations to such a view.

So, *what are the media today?* Importantly, central distinctions that once linked systems of delivery to their characteristic content (for example, the links between

TV programs and broadcast TV) are losing their clarity. We no longer have to turn on the radio to listen to programs produced by our favourite radio station—we can listen on our home computer and, much more often these days, to streamed content on our mobile phone or tablet. For household consumers, a pay TV subscription, internet access, landline and mobile phone services can all be bundled into one transaction with a telecommunications company and/or ISP. Even financially challenged students can usually afford a pre-paid mobile service that provides all-important access to the web, social media and texting. The co-founder of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, regards access to the web as a human right and, whether or not regulators try to require what used to be called USOs (universal service obligations) from service providers, the vast majority of people find a way to stay connected. It *is* their contemporary human right.

As we download music or video from the net, it is not necessarily clear whether we are participating in the media industry, the music industry or the information technology industry—or perhaps committing a crime against international copyright regulations. At the level of content, the boundaries between formerly discrete media formats such as news, current affairs and entertainment have blurred as well. Reality TV has dissolved the boundaries between game shows, scripted soap operas and documentaries; television plays a disconcertingly direct role in the contestants' everyday lives as their participation in a televised game generates effects on their 'real lives' outside. Newer forms of media and communications—the blogosphere, the Twitterverse, massive multi-player online gaming (MMOG), and mobile entertainment and information apps—challenge media studies to come up with strategies of analysis that are able to understand the functions, uses and meanings of a vast array of media experiences.

Even the question of '*whose* media is it?' has become more difficult to answer, as content and audiences spread over national and geographic boundaries. In particular, the globalisation of the major international media conglomerates makes the question of what constitutes *Australian* media and communications one that must be reassessed regularly. Foreign (and cross-media) ownership of the media in Australia was deregulated in 2007, with quite dramatic effects, as Chapter 5 outlines. The Free Trade Agreement with the United States, finalised in 2005, placed an embargo on certain forms of media regulation in this country. The second biggest telecommunications business, Optus, is owned by Singtel, a company that is majority owned by the Singapore government. Foreign equity firms now play a large part in the ownership structures of the majority of commercial television networks. Major players such as Google are beginning to exert influence in the media ecology. Changes in media ownership, preferential political deals with major media proprietors and the high

level of penetration of international communications content and systems into the Australian market mean that debates about what is 'Australian' about our media have changed substantially over recent years.

CONVERGENCE AND COMPETITION

One of the two most protean forces driving reassessment of the nature of media and communications today is 'convergence'. Convergence is customarily used to describe the dissolving distinctions between media systems, media content and the resulting trade between systems. Typically, it describes the activities of a communications company such as Telstra with convergent interests in pay TV (50 per cent ownership of Foxtel), fixed and mobile telephones, online video (Telstra T-Box) and internet provision (BigPond).

There are three dimensions to the idea of convergence: the convergence of technologies, of industries and of policies. *Technological convergence*, enabled by technologies of digitisation, refers to the increasing ability to carry and convert 'content'—sound, data, image or text—into multiple formats. For example, the same piece of music might be used in the form of a CD played on the home sound system, or downloaded on to the home computer or as a digital file on an MP3 player such as an iPod. Such technological capability has facilitated *industry convergence,* where formerly separate sectors of the media industries and the communications economy (such as broadcasting, telecommunications, computing, publishing and the arts) have sought to merge or form alliances.

These shifts have necessitated significant modifications to the policy regimes used to regulate the industries concerned. These might be understood better if we think of the history of media and communications regulation and policy as going through three distinct stages. The first stage, which lasted for most of the last century, was based on *scarcity,* and saw protection, universal service and public interest come to the fore. The second stage, which is now coming to an end, was based on *abundance,* and focused on liberalisation, competition, efficiency and diversity. The third stage is still emerging, but it will reflect the decentralisation of the communications infrastructure, and it is likely to begin to place the media and communications industries within the broader and more generic regulation of the services industries (see Pavlik 1996, p. 259). For those who see the media as playing a particular social, political and cultural role in society, these are far-reaching changes, the consequences of which need to be carefully considered. Chapter 5 canvasses a major 'Convergence Review' that occurred in Australia in 2011–12. It proposed the creation of a new category of 'Content Services Enterprises', which placed the big broadcasters, telcos and ISPs

together for regulatory purposes. It found itself dealing with the regulation of journalism, the future of Australian content quotas on television, spectrum allocation and resale, ownership and control, matters touching on innovation and competition policy and much more. Convergence touches on virtually everything.

One of the trickier aspects of convergence is 'content convergence'. 'Content' here refers to what used to be called the media 'message'—or, within most of the industries initially concerned, programming. The distinction is between the medium or system of delivery (the technology used) and the material it is used to carry (the content). Content, as the term is used today, could refer to a television program, the information on a website, in an app or an email message. As the corporate organisation of the media and communications industries changes, and as competition between media sectors increases, there is growing pressure to gain the maximum use from the content being produced. In practice, this means exploiting the capacity to present the same content, with the necessary modifications, on as many platforms of delivery and distribution as possible. In the movie industry, a new title will carry a raft of spin-off products—from t-shirts to computer games to theme park rides. In radio, it means establishing a website that offers everything from an online version of radio programming and archived transcripts of broadcasts to fan websites, chatrooms and gig guides. The comfortable sectoral differentiations that once existed no longer hold, and competition is extraordinarily comprehensive as every medium competes with every other medium.

The fact that convergence also brings media companies into ever-wider business relations means that conflicts of interest are rife. An outstanding example in Australia is the media coverage of sport. Sport has become a driver of innovation, growth and profitability in television—especially subscription television. Media organisations—among them some of the biggest in the world—have taken up commercial interests in the sports themselves, as well as in their coverage. An example of this is the role played by News Limited as a part-owner of Rugby League in Australia since the Murdoch-sponsored SuperLeague intervention, which split the code for a short while in the late 1990s, as well as its major ownership of Super15 Rugby, shown exclusively on pay television.

As particular kinds of media services are becoming less differentiated by their content, competition is growing more pervasive and intense. Sometimes this cuts across the boundaries set by earlier conceptions of regulation, exposing the old players to what they consider unfair competition. For instance, the introduction of technologies like Skype allows internet service providers (ISPs) to provide telephone calls over the internet rather than through telephone companies. The telcos have opposed this kind of development, arguing that an access fee should be imposed on users of ISPs

for this purpose. Understandably, such companies might resent what they regard as the maverick *laissez-faire* capitalism of the internet, which is not yet required by government regulation to deliver the kind of social outcomes demanded of telephone companies in addition to their commercial and technological innovations.

The commercial environment has now become more complicated, and in a way its choices have become more compressed, as the media are increasingly providing entertainment rather than information—and thus attempting to second-guess people's taste preferences before their information needs. Dealing with the tastes of audiences they never see and will never come to know personally, the media are always riding their hunches, sweating on the ratings, the charts or the circulation, and regularly looking to upgrade and refine their measurement of audiences (see Chapter 4). But this is far from being a precise science. The imprecision of mass media ratings measurement methods comes under even greater scrutiny as the relative precision of internet and mobile media metrics of use begin to attract the attention of advertisers and marketers. Hence there is intense industry interest in finding ways to 'monetise' (crudely, how to make money from) the developing usage of new media.

The performance of the media has, of course, always had a strong element of unpredictability to it, and so what must be regarded as its increased unpredictability in the current competitive framework does not mean that we should simply leave it alone. Public surveys routinely find that Australians are concerned about the quality of media performance. Issues to do with the representation of violence, intrusive methods of journalism and the quality of news and current affairs, as well as the quality and volume of advertising, are raised repeatedly in response to such surveys. The phone hacking maelstrom that engulfed UK media in 2011–12 and gave rise to the Leveson Inquiry had repercussions in Australia with the Finkelstein Independent Media Inquiry in 2012, which gave voice to much disquiet about journalistic standards and the ability to talk back effectively to media. The demonstrated audience loyalty to the national broadcaster, the ABC—a loyalty that doesn't always reflect the viewing preferences picked up by the ratings system—seems to imply a commitment to maintaining a media system that is not solely commercial in nature. As a result, media performance has not been left entirely to the industry; community concerns have also required government to play a part.

THE VELOCITY OF CHANGE

The other theme that today ties more of the study of Australian media and communications together than any other is the idea that we are in the middle of a rapid process of change, which is seeing established, or 'old', media being challenged for primacy in

audiences' and users' attention by new modes and types of production, dissemination and display. Of course, there are commercial interests in play in public accounts of changes in the media, so it is important that the claims made for each new development be evaluated on the basis of the evidence, rather than corporate spin or the enthusiasm of the early adopters. Sorting out the credibility of such claims is one of the purposes of this book. You will discover that virtually every chapter in this book has something to say about this issue. Working out what's going on, why, how, where and with what effect are perhaps the central concerns of media and communications studies today.

To take just a few examples, we are reminded in the chapter on the press (Chapter 6) of the long-term decline in newspaper circulation, which is seemingly irreversible. But also of note is the fact that the decline is uneven. Some up-market publications have forestalled major decline by establishing a focus on hard news targeted at what are defined as the most desirable readership categories—a strategy that may work even in the dire circumstances of the contemporary print media. In Chapters 14, 16 and 27, we also encounter evidence of the rapid growth of the blogosphere, and of amateur or citizen journalism. Certainly it has been argued that this latter phenomenon is a democratising trend, but there are downsides as well. If citizen journalism were to be taken up more and more broadly, the loss of employment prospects for journalists (including rolling cuts at both major news outlets, Fairfax Media and News Limited) has as much potential for creating a democratic deficit through the loss of experienced journalists from the Australian public sphere.

The music industry has been turned upside down by the ease with which peers can download and share their favourite bands. A major new player has come into the music distribution industry—Apple iTunes—with a legal downloads business model, but it remains the case that this still represents a minority of the total download and sharing activity via the net. Significantly, it took a computer company (albeit with a remarkable record of innovation) to develop this model. As Chapter 13 points out, the recording industry remains bitterly divided about the legalities of digital consumption, with the majors continuing to claim ongoing devastation while other evidence points to judicious use of the net as a promotional medium benefiting many music entrepreneurs. As noted earlier, the debates reflect both genuine attempts to find ways to appropriately restructure the industries concerned in relation to these new developments, and corporate attempts to influence regulatory and political support for their current pattern of interests.

Film and television is finally (Australia lags behind the United States and Europe in this respect by some years) beginning to be affected significantly by digital distribution models after several years of defensive reaction as well as aggressive litigation against illegal downloading and the large aggregators such as Google (targeting its subsidiary,

YouTube). Seeing evidence of widespread illegal downloading (using platforms such as BitTorrent), numerous digital distribution initiatives are crowding into this opportunity space. The turbulence surrounding the emerging digital marketplace in film and television gave rise to the largest strike (in 2007–08) by the Writers Guild in Hollywood in 20 years. This reflected the range of ramifications to flow from these new modes of distribution: ramifications that affect not only the companies who hold copyright on the programming or movies concerned, and the new providers attempting to develop a viable business in distributing this content via the net, but also raise issues for those actors and other workers who contributed to the production of this content at a point when the prospect of cross-platform earnings was not a factor to be considered.

As we have indicated, the challenge for students of the media is that much of the debate you will encounter is polarised. There is an exaggerated opposition between enthusiastic optimism versus determined scepticism or pessimism about the potential of new technologies like the internet and Web 2.0. There are assertions of a 'fundamental crisis' in the strategies of the media and communications industries versus counter-assertions of *plus ça change, plus la même chose*—that is, that 'hegemonic capitalism' will always triumph. And, as we noted earlier, while many will claim that the situation they confront is indeed historic, few will actually turn to media history as a means to properly understand what is occurring in a more illuminating context.

The overheated nature of these debates can be confusing because the importance of the issue for so many of those concerned brings to the fore deep-seated attitudes that often result in 'glass half empty/glass half full' debates. These tend to manage the challenging complexity of trends and data by dividing them into selective portions that confirm previously established positions. But such factors do underline the importance of the issue, and show that industry figures, analysts, audiences and users are deeply aware of the stakes involved. You will also have a direct stake in this debate and its outcomes, as it is almost certain that you are both a participant in some form of social media and a consumer of traditional media.

The fact is that change is continuous, but it is less clear what we might make of it. Are we 'both witnesses to and participants in the largest, most fundamental transformation in the history of the media since the advent of typeface, the moving image, and terrestrial broadcast transmission' (Levin 2009, p. 258)? Or, alternatively, is the evidence for the wholesale supplanting of the old media by new media actually 'sparse and thin' (Miller 2010, p.10)? Such speculations ignore the lessons of history that tell us it is more likely for the new to be folded into the old, adding to what has gone before rather than killing it off.

Instead of having to decide categorically one way or the other, we need to ask a range of questions that can be researched intensively. What, for instance, are the

rates of change? Are they speeding up? What are the established models of production–distribution–consumption? How and why are they changing? What are the alternative models? What have been their histories and successes/failures? What different impacts have these changes had on different sectors? Seeking to answer these questions will engage you in an exciting journey into the central aspects of media and communications studies.

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS BOOK

We have divided this book into three parts: *Approaches*, *Industries* and *Issues*. In Part I, five chapters survey the range of approaches and methodologies used within media and communications studies in Australia today. None is assumed to be sufficient by itself, and the range of disciplines covered is wide. As this introduction indicates, intellectual trade between once mutually exclusive approaches is now becoming a common occurrence in media and communications studies. Such trade may create some unstable and even threatening alliances, but it endows great explanatory power on the field. It also marks the classic location of media studies at the boundaries between the humanities and the social sciences. At its most productive, a methodologically inclusive media and communications studies maintains a dynamic relation between critical insight and empirical method, between content analysis and textual analysis, and between oppositional politics and a politics of reform and participation. As users of this book will find, it is composed of many contributing strands of theory, method and perspective. It also implies an activist relation to the field, either through the critique of media and communications policy, or through an interrogation of the performance of the media against their responsibilities to the public interest. We study the media and communications not only to find out how they work, but also to evaluate their operations as citizens, and possibly participate as aspiring professionals in their performance.

Part II deals with the media and communications industries themselves. Accounts of the established media sectors—broadcasting (radio, television), telecommunications, print media (newspapers, magazines), advertising, popular music and film—accompany chapters that respond to what we described earlier as a restructuring of the field of media and communications. The internet, online and mobile telephone cultures, and computer games and apps are included to present a thorough and comprehensive overview of the media and communications industries in Australia today. The chapters in this part provide a historical perspective that acknowledges both the industrial and the policy dimensions of the industry concerned, as well as alerting readers to key issues for the present and the future.

Part III looks at a select group of contemporary media issues. We have reshaped this section, with each of these short chapters intended as a model essay for the kinds of assessment that are often found in introductory media and communications courses. The topics have been chosen, in most cases, to cut across the industry sectors covered in Part II and to engage students across a diverse range of interests, including sports, lives 'lived' through social media and the privacy implications of the phenomenon, cultural diversity, the portrayal of celebrity culture, the environment and media use during crises. Social media is treated as an emerging industry sector in its own right, and the apps 'industry' as the newest 'new' platform to emerge. It is hoped that these short essays will act as stimuli for students, prompting them to consider how they might choose to write about these or related topics at a later date and from a different perspective.

Of course, not everyone will want to read every part of this book, so the chapters are designed to stand alone as discussions of their section of the field. The authors have been chosen for their expertise, and include many of the major scholars and experienced teachers currently working in Australia. No matter what the topic or approach, there is a common objective: a greater understanding of the media and communications, which in turn can move us towards a grounded engagement with Australian culture and society.

WHY STUDY AUSTRALIAN MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS?

Finally, we should ask why we want to understand the media industries, the regulatory climate within which they operate in Australia, their production processes, their products and the ways in which they are used by and contribute to Australian society. These are fair questions, and it has to be admitted that the answers we give to them throughout this book are not disinterested. Our answers proceed from a set of views about the role the media should play in our society, and about what the media are. But there can be no disinterested position on the media: their social and political function is so profound, so central, that all of us adopt attitudes towards them which reflect our own interests, our own placement within the power structures of the society and our own cultural politics.

The health of this field of study is a direct reflection of the importance of these questions. Media and communications have only been studied formally at a tertiary level in Australia since the 1970s. In that time, several surveys (Frow and Morris 1993; Turner 1993a; Wilson 2006) have pointed to a set of interrelated fields of inquiry that have emerged strongly over a generation and now occupy positions of consolidated popularity among students, maintaining the position of media and communications

as the most popular specific field of study in the broad humanities for much of the last decade. It is interesting to track the consistent growth of the discipline based on two earlier comprehensive studies (Molloy and Lennie 1990; Putnis 2000). Looking at the contemporary situation based on official student enrolment data, there has been an overall growth in student numbers from 19 293 in 2002 to 22 321 in 2007 to 29 869 in 2012. While total higher education enrolments rose by 9 per cent over this period, media and communications rose by 55 per cent.

The current *Good Universities Guide* (2013) tells us that media and communications courses are now offered by 52 institutions across 102 campuses, making it the eleventh most popular field of study in Australia. Media and communications is similar in popularity to accounting or computing and IT. The *Good Universities Guide* also points out that demand for such courses (measured as the cut-off points for entry) can be very high for media and communications at some universities. Graduate satisfaction within media and communications courses is significantly higher than that of most graduates across the country in terms of assessment and workload, and more achieve full-time employment than is the norm across the broader fields of humanities or creative arts. While it was the newer universities that developed the first wave of media and communications courses, and still have more than a third of all student enrolments, the field is well represented in the older universities and in further education institutions.

What about career prospects for graduates from media and communications courses? Of course, many factors come in to play here that are quite independent of the quality and relevance of the course content and which institution provides it. But what we know about career outcomes provides a positive story.

Recognising that we don't know enough about the career pathways of our graduates, in 2012 Stuart Cunningham, with Ruth Bridgstock, conducted a survey of all alumni from the last ten years in Queensland University of Technology's media, cultural and communications studies (MCCS) degrees (for further detail, see Cunningham and Bridgstock 2012). There was a very high response rate—our graduates were happy to talk to their old university, which was very gratifying. About a quarter of the cohort had engaged in further formal study. The largest category of those who did engage in further study stayed within the discipline cluster, which indicates strong satisfaction with, and commitment to, the career trajectory opened by their initial qualification.

Although 24 per cent had been unemployed at some point since graduation, the average length of time unemployed was just two months. Only 4 per cent of the cohort had been unemployed more than once since graduation. While the expected job titles appear prominently—journalism, marketing, public relations—there was a long list of

jobs undertaken by the cohort—a total of 110 different job titles for 403 graduates. The first year out is a turbulent time involving multiple job-holding, higher levels of casual work, voluntary work, work not related to MCCS and non-degree level work. This turbulence resolves itself from Year 2 onwards.

A total of 83 per cent said that graduates from MCCS courses had special skills that added value to the workplace. These special skills included written communication, the ability to apply theoretical knowledge practically, critical and analytical thinking, media-related disciplinary skills and verbal communication skills. Given the high level of volatility and disruption in the media industries into which many MCCS graduates go, no matter how vocationally oriented a course might be, the relevance of their graduating aptitudes, skills and networks will be under pressure, and the we have found that the thorough mixing of disciplinary and generic attributes and skills may situate them well.

Of course, this popularity and success have drawn criticism. Media and communications studies can be attacked by the media themselves, or by academics in other disciplines, as 'nothing more than the trivial dissection of popular movies and television shows' (Levin 2009, p. 259). Media and communications studies' influence on Australian school English curricula, for instance, has been attacked as a diversion from the core interests of the subject. However, most acknowledge that the importance of media and communications studies is actually increasing as we head into a more media-saturated society, where identity, social relationships, the future of the democratic process and what we know about the world around us are becoming increasingly dependent on media and communications industries, technologies, content and platforms. As a consequence, media and communications studies is expanding its disciplinary reach, taking on the insights offered by law, the arts, business and more.

The final word might appropriately go to an industry leader. Jordan Levin was part of the executive team that established some of US television's major youth drama programs, like *Dawson's Creek*, *Gilmore Girls*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Smallville*. Reflecting from an industry perspective, he argues the need for establishing media studies 'as not simply a respectable interdisciplinary field of knowledge, but one that is critical to mapping our future, [which] must become a priority throughout academia, the media industry itself, and all of the constituencies it touches' (Levin 2009, p. 261).

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