Volume 4 Number 1

Re-write or be written out: moving a textbook through changing paradigms

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Abstract

This paper responds to Paxton's lament that suggests there is a 'deafening silence' between those who author, edit and publish textbooks and the teachers and students who use them.

The writer of a textbook that has been through three editions over twenty years necessarily adapts the book to changing teaching paradigms and evolving conceptions of what defines the core teaching of a subject. There are even changes in the expectations of what a textbook should be and do – especially if those twenty years span the emergence of the internet.

This article charts the writing process for the three editions of the Australian Media Studies textbook *Media: new ways and meanings*, and places the book within the context of the emblematic discourses or paradigms of the subject in each time period. It examines the significant changes in thinking about the pedagogy of media studies subjects that have occurred over this period in all Australian states, and the role of a textbook in both reflecting and leading these changes.

Key informant interviews were held in two Australian states to ascertain the role of the book within its context. As part of the writing process for the third edition of the textbook, an internet survey of media teachers in two Australian states, together with a focus group and several descriptive surveys aimed to find out what teachers

wanted in a contemporary media studies textbook, and to involve them in the selection of content.

The research presented here suggests that there were several paradigm shifts in Australian media studies and that various authors and the textbooks they wrote participated in, and to some extent shaped these. The research also suggests that the perceived role of textbooks in media studies subjects varies to some extent between the three main Australian states that have formal media studies subjects. Findings also suggest that the role of textbooks has changed over time as teachers demand more recontextualisation, and as textbooks incorporate more visual and multimedia material.

Key Words: Media studies, Textbooks, Media education, Textbook design

Introduction

> What! All those words, piled up one after another, all those marks made on all that paper and presented to innumerable pairs of eyes, all that concern to make them survive … all that and nothing remaining of the poor hand that traced them, of the anxiety that sought appeasement in them, of that completed life that has nothing but them to survive in? (Foucault 1972, 23).

Paxton (1999) suggests that there is a 'deafening silence' between those who author, edit and publish textbooks and the teachers and students who use them. This is a critical silence as textbooks are an integral part of education systems and, in a wide range of classrooms, act as a bridge between teachers and students (Bliss 2005). This is especially so because time-scarce teachers need rapid access to readily available teaching and learning materials written to support their students' learning. In addition, textbooks exert a 'textual authority' (Johnsen 1993). Within this silence, there is a specific and particular additional deafness. Although authors of fiction inform readers of their attitudes, thoughts, values and motivation, there has been almost no research in the field from the perspective of the authors of textbooks, with the exception of Bliss (2005) and some introductory ideas explored by Johnsen (1993).

Bliss notes that authors aim for reliability, validity, consistency and truth in textbooks, as they serve as a vital resource for both students and teachers. But it must be noted that textbooks incorporate a condensed overview of a subject where subjectivity and omission are unsolvable problems. Also, authors' views are to some extent subject to overview by the editor and publisher (Bliss 2005). But authors, being at the core of professional communities of practice also shape the professional community, and individual authors interpret a curriculum and provide this interpretation to shape the way that teachers and students ultimately approach teaching and learning.

This paper reinforces the subjective nature of the researcher's role at the heart of qualitative research, and reports on the research process of collecting data on the

development and use of a textbook, situating the research in the reflection of the world of the observer and observed simultaneously.

This reflective, author-focused research locates its own subjectivity and positioning, but has a strong capacity to inform practice and lead to enhanced learning artefacts for students and teachers. The research has lead to the repositioning a textbook, in order to reposition teacher and student textual and educational communities.

The Author

Over twenty-five years ago I embarked on a unit plan for media studies in the subject of English with barely an inkling that it would end up as a full-blown 550-page textbook now in its third Australian edition.

Then, I was in my youth and consigned to teach in a small country town 16 hours drive from the capital city. So too in its youth was the newly emerging area of media studies in the Queensland and Australian curriculums. Across the span of those twenty-five years it would become a subject discipline in its own right. The study of media would move from the far-flung fringes of the school curriculum to ... well, a position much more important in the consciousness of educators – but still somehow flung off from the centre and 'regional'.

In that time, the three Australian editions of the textbook *Media: new ways and meanings* (1990; 1997; 2008) were produced. A spin-off UK edition was also published (Stewart, Lavelle & Kowaltzke 2001). It is clear now that each edition was written within what probably constitutes its own particular social and cultural era, and within the context of different conceptions of media studies. Each edition involved the taking on of an additional author. The latest edition took shape within a different understanding of the role of the textbook itself, brought on by the arrival of Web 2.0 and increasing online interactivity. Only now can I take the time to look back and see how I was shaped as a writer by these different time periods, and how the textbook I wrote assisted in the promulgation of particular ways of thinking about the subject of media studies.

It is said that authors begin to write for three reasons:

Vanity: or at best a desire to make one's mark upon the world and achieve immortality;
A desire to change the world: sometimes revolutionary zeal or missionary enthusiasm, but often just a need to put right a few of the things seen to be wrong;
A love of writing: Authors love language and its structures, or at least feel competent with writing and have had earlier successes. Writing is a means of pinning down meaning and giving permanence to thought.

The late seventies and early eighties were a time of missionary enthusiasm for changing the world – especially the world of education. Newly graduating teachers were sent off to take up their new teaching positions with the instruction, "Go out there and change the system!". University filled us with ideas drawn from the South American 'liberation pedagogy' of Paulo Freire, and Basil Bernstein's new and

politicised 'socio-linguistics' (Freire 1970; Bernstein 1971). Meanwhile, a love of writing drew me towards the teaching of English and further studies in journalism. Vanity, perhaps, came into play when the realisation dawned that explicit teaching of the genre conventions in journalism could be applied to the English classroom. Few teachers in the schools where I taught appeared to understand the conventions of the media, or were able to make a concerted effort to convey these to students. I vainly thought they needed me to write a unit plan (and maybe later a textbook)!

Media studies textbooks in Australia, indeed many textbooks used in English and the humanities, are often used in class set situations or in textbook hire schemes. Individual purchase by students and teachers makes up a much smaller section of the market and is more common in certain Australian states (such as Victoria) than others. There is no sure way to measure the impact of a book when it is not subject to direct individual sales. There is no measure of how many students have used a book in the environment of textbook hire schemes. Similarly, individual student purchase often results in follow-up purchases in the secondhand market, again complicating things. One possible way to quantify impact is to borrow from public broadcasting the concept of audience 'reach'. Reach is an estimate of how many people are reached by a broadcaster in a given period. This is in contrast to the traditional commercial broadcasting audience measure of ratings that measure how many people watch a particular program. With the publishers, I developed an estimate of textbook reach within a projected five-year lifespan of each copy, calculating an estimated sixteen users per hire scheme copy. Using this formula, *Media: new ways and meanings* (1990; 1997; 2008) is estimated to have 'reached' more than 500,000 Australian students.

Methodology

At this point in my life, and the book's history, there is the opportunity to self-reflexively examine the process of writing the textbook, and also the textbook's participation in the shaping processes involved in creating the subject it attempts to represent.

> … a reflexive scholar is one who applies to their own work the same critical stance, the same interrogative questions and the same refusal to take things for granted as they do with their own research data. Developing a reflexive disposition is profoundly about the being and doing of scholarship. It is about the personal and the person of the researcher (Kamler & Thomson 2006, 66).

As part of this self-reflexive investigation, a range of 'key informant' interviews were conducted in the Australian states of Queensland and Victoria to assist in the process of placing the textbook within its context.

Separate to the self-reflexive investigations, three related methodologies were applied to the actual writing of the third edition of the textbook that have provided some of the remaining information for this article. First, a descriptive questionnaire was sent to five selected Australian media educators – one each from the states of Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and New South Wales (i.e. all states except Tasmania and The Northern Territory). Second, an internet survey

was conducted during the initial writing phase for the third edition of the textbook. Queensland and Victorian media teachers were surveyed. The uptake for the internet survey was particularly strong. It is estimated that almost twenty per cent of all media teachers in Victoria and Queensland took part in the survey. The third stage of the research was conducted in Victoria only. Following the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Victorian state conference in Melbourne, I held a focus group to discuss what senior school Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Media teachers needed from a textbook.

Textbooks and subject development

> " ... Areas of the academic curriculum ... are no more than the socio-historical constructs of a particular time" (Young 1971, 23).

In the last twenty-five years, Australian media studies has been the site of struggle for what is the knowledge base of the subject, and how it should be taught (Quin 2006, 91). This has had major implications for textbook writers. Investigation through key informant interviews and techniques of Foucauldian archaeology have yielded some information as to the part that *Media: new ways and meanings* played in the development of the subject knowledge base. Quin's work (2006, 92) also shows differences in interpretation between education authorities, the written syllabus, textbooks, and teachers as practitioners in classrooms.

The school subject Media Studies is not, and never has been, a cohesive or stable body of knowledge articulated in a syllabus and realised in a classroom. Its subject knowledge has been produced, negotiated and changed in response to changes in the education system, society and the power relations which reach across schools and their communities (Quin 2006, 92).

It is possible that some of the contestation in media studies courses is related to the relative newness of the subjects. Anstead and Goodson et al. (1998, 4) cite Layton's (1972; 1973) view of the development of school subjects as being in three stages: beginning with the introduction of the subject on the grounds of relevance to students, where it is taught by non-specialist teachers whose chief qualification is missionary zeal; to the mature stage, where subject matter is mostly influenced by the practices of leading specialists and academics, and there are established rules and values. Media studies courses in Australia and the UK do seem broadly to conform to Layton's stages

The early stage of media studies may be thought of as being the late 1960s and the 1970s, perhaps concluding in the early '80s (at the time I began writing). In the UK, for instance, Sefton-Green describes early-stage media studies as being "the product of an activist teacher-workforce radically exploring questions of context and pedagogy" (Sefton-Green 2007). This corresponds to my own recollection of early stage media studies in Australia and the enthusiasm of the teachers at the time. As Dunscombe, a current media studies textbook author in Victoria writes: "In my experience the … [early media studies] … courses were taught as production subjects largely by teachers with no academic qualifications in media, but with a passionate interest in production (Dunscombe 2007, 12).

In Australia, the late 1980s and 1990s could be regarded as Layton's middle phase of the subject. A media studies syllabus evaluation report found a quite different profile for teachers at this time:

> Most teachers have completed some form of media studies as part of a degree or diploma course. This appears to have provided the basis for content/knowledge but most teachers also cited their own interest, study and on the job training as the source of their knowledge and expertise. Teachers also acknowledged the part professional associations played (Norris 1996, 12).

The third stage of the subject probably begins around the turn of the twenty-first century and the arrival of the user-oriented media culture of the Web 2.0 environment. Maturity has come in a stronger sense of the nature of the subject discipline and its theoretical bases. The widespread acceptance of university courses in media, multimedia and creative industry production have certainly assisted the maturation of the subject in high schools.

The increasing formalisation of the expertise of teachers as the subject progressed through Layton's stages of development appears not to have changed another attribute of media teaching – the relative isolation. Anstead and Goodson et al. (1998, 6) cite Esland (1971) and argue that subject discipline knowledge is often socially constructed and held in common with others in the field operating within the same paradigms. They suggest that teachers in general operate within relatively dispersed epistemic communities and can therefore suffer 'conceptual precariousness' as a result of the isolation. Dispersal of community is keenly felt by media teachers throughout Australia, who usually operate in schools where they are the sole media teacher, or there is perhaps one other. For many media teachers, it is textbooks that have reduced their epistemic isolation.

> The first edition of *Media: new ways and meanings* came out at a time when the subject was maturing. To some extent it took on the role of a pedagogic tool for teaching teachers. The textbook itself helped to formalise the subject within the state of Queensland (Michael Dezuanni: Queensland Media educator – key informant interview).

It follows that the three editions of *Media: new ways and meanings* have had a significant effect upon the socially constructed knowledge of the media education communities in Australia. Arguably, these books (and including those of other authors) have been significant in moving media studies courses around Australia through the stages from infancy to maturity.

Some of the contestation within media studies over the last twenty-five years may also be related to the nature of the subject and its theoretical bases or basis. Basil Bernstein established a concept of classification to examine the boundaries between the subject disciplines of the secondary school. He argued that traditional subjects such as Physics or History maintain a strong 'insulation' from other subjects (or categories as they might be called) (Bernstein 2000, 6). These self-regulating subject discourses Bernstein (2000, 9) decided to call 'singulars' because they mostly

construct their discourse about themselves – not in relation to other disciplines or categories. In contrast to the strongly classified disciplines, Bernstein set up the notion of 'regions', which are created out of combinations of recontextualised singulars. "Regions are the interface between the field of production of knowledge and any field of practice" (Bernstein 2000, 9). The nature of the region depends on which singulars are selected and recontextualised. With its roots in English and the social sciences, and theoretical strands drawn from Cultural Studies and Semiotics, together with its theory-production duality, Media Studies exemplifies Bernstein's notion of a region. In such a conception, it is likely that there will be some struggle over which singulars predominate at different points in time in the subject's development. Textbooks play a powerful part in this process and the aspects of a region that authors select can be a significant impetus towards a subject taking a certain direction.

> The crucial thing is how a subject as a region – or field within a school – is constructed. It is constructed, not by any one thing, but by teachers and students in the classroom as a result of being informed by theory, being informed by syllabus documents, and definitely from being informed by textbooks – because some teachers only rely on textbooks (Michael Dezuanni: – key informant interview).

The second and third editions of *Media: new ways and meanings* (Stewart & Kowaltzke 1997, 2008) have also filled this role – especially for pre-service teachers who get to understand the scope of the media education 'region' through familiarity with the material in the textbooks.

> In our university curriculum courses, we currently have this book on our 'required text' list for two Film and Media curriculum units. It is also a 'recommended text' for an English curriculum unit (Dezuanni 2005 1).

> As a media education lecturer … I found that trainees and experienced teachers found the text very easy to use with students and with rich examples from the media to engage students as well as a plethora of excellent activities (Burton 2008).

Textbooks and subject 'mindsets'

Foucault's conception of discourse is useful in providing an 'archaeological' understanding of media studies as it has developed over time. He defined a discourse as "a group of statements that belong to a single system of formation" (Foucault 1972, 107). Hartley (2002, 75) considers this conception of discourse to mean "the social process of making and reproducing sense".

There is widespread agreement amongst media studies academics that there are four main discourses that have been prominent in media education since the 1960s (Masterman 1985; Buckingham & Sefton-Green 1994; Tyner 1998; Buckingham 2003; Dezuanni 2009). These involve discourses around protection, discrimination, demystification and participation. Such discourses can be further traced to the

different theoretical positions on communication, and the relationship that each asserts may exist between the media and society.

Far from being simple, transparent, 'windows on the world' of an unproblematic subject discipline, textbooks are themselves carriers of particular perspectives and points of view. Much of education has been linked to "relations of cultural domination" and the "selection and organisation of school knowledge is an ideological process" (Apple & Christian-Smith 1991 9). *Media: new ways and meanings* has been itself the carrier of many of the contemporaneous discourses of media education.

Protectionist discourses

In 1933, F.R. Leavis issued his famous call to arms against the seductions of popular culture: "We cannot … leave the citizen to be formed unconsciously by his environment … he must be trained to discriminate and to resist" (Leavis & Thompson 1933, 5). In this statement he inaugurated the protectionist discourse in media education. Leavis called upon teachers to uphold the value of high culture, and to analyse popular media in classrooms primarily as a way of highlighting its inadequacies – "education against the environment" as he put it (Leavis & Thompson 1933 106).

The aim of protectionist media education has been to analyse media texts and thereby show students how they work and how they can manipulate audiences – hopefully inoculating them against being conned in the future. "Media education, in this scenario, is the pedagogic equivalent of a tetanus shot" (Bazalgette 1999 72)

Protectionism in the textbook

The first edition of my textbook, *The Media: ways and meanings* (1990), gives some service to the protectionist discourse. Early cover designs portray a menacing and 'big brother' image of the media that was later changed as it was seen as potentially negative for sales. It was thought that teachers and students would find the image too threatening and overpowering. The chapters on the medium of television have an initial protectionist tone, with the introductory section on television headed "an awesome godless force" (Stewart 1990, 2). Nevertheless, most of the book is concerned with media genres, and the first edition is aimed at developing an interest in media practices rather than critiquing them (this changes in the second edition where there is a much greater focus on representation).
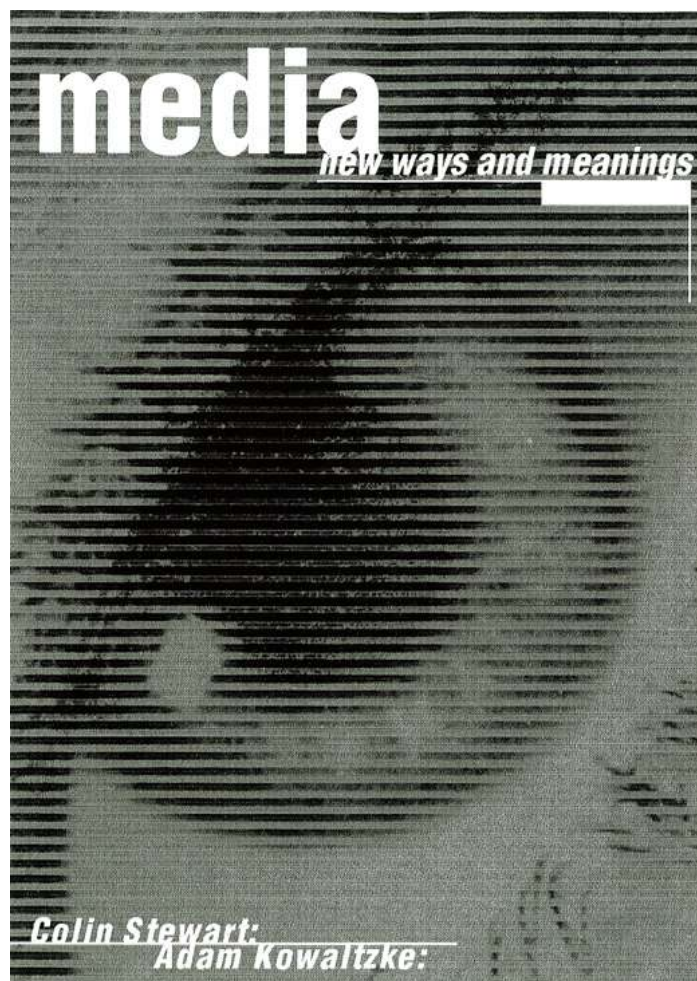
Figure 1: Proposed cover design for second (1997) edition of Media: new ways and meanings is suggestive of a 'Big Brother' media that students need to be protected from. While the second edition is not dominated by a protectionist agenda, the proposed cover design positions it within this discourse.

The Media: ways and meanings does not return to the protectionist discourse until the section on media ownership at the end. Here, it is political protectionism that is the focus. Later editions of the book progressively reduced the emphasis on overt protectionism. However, there did develop an increased focus on specific areas of concern about the media – such as media violence, stereotyping, gender representation and media influence. A survey respondent had this to say:

> Occasionally the book tends to show a little bias towards an 'effects' approach (or a deterministic approach), which is somewhat outmoded. That is, it assumes that the media do have negative effects or that they can determine aspects of society (Queensland respondent – descriptive questionnaire).

Some of this protectionist tone remains in the third edition of the book as a result of a measure of inertia in my own political perspective. Some remains because of more practical reasons, such as a lack of time to rewrite sections (for example, the section on film violence). The impetus to rewrite the earlier sections came from my own deepening realisations and shifting alignments within media education itself, but the impetus also came from a practical motivation: a desire to assuage the demands of

various institutional gatekeepers, including curriculum review panels, professional teacher associations and educational advisers – and to appeal to the market.
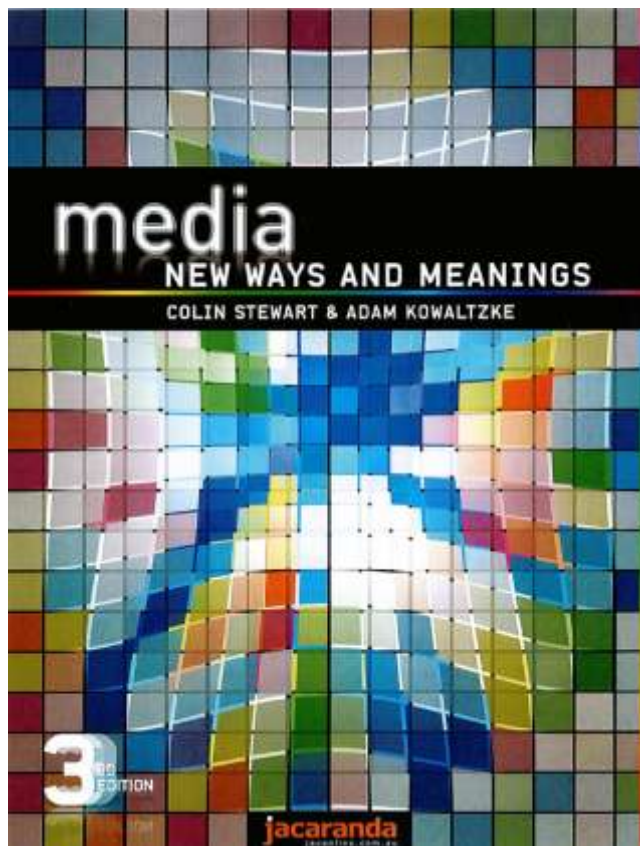

Figure 2: Cover design for the third (2007) edition of Media: new ways and meanings positions the book within the participation discourse. Pixels in the centre of the design suck the reader into the vortex of contemporary media and suggest that individuals become a part of the media itself.

Discrimination discourses

The discrimination discourse came to the fore in the 1960s and early 1970s, about the same time it must have become clear that the Leavisite call to hold back the tide of popular media culture was going to be an exercise in futility. Instead, the aim of media education became the development of selective and discriminating media consumption habits in students who would "seek out and appreciate distinctive high-quality programming and […] develop a critical sense of form, format, and content in mass media" (Brown 1998, 47). The early writings of Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannel are most often associated with this discourse – particularly their 1964 book *The Popular Arts*.

> In terms of actual quality ... the struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle against the modern forms of communication but a conflict within these media (Hall & Whannel 1967, 15).

Hall and Whannel (and the discrimination discourse) did not discard Leavis's lofty notions of high and low culture; instead "the distinction between the tasteful and the disdained was marked internally in popular television programs, rock music and

comic books" (Erni 2004, 298). A feature of discrimination discourses was a focus on film as a higher form of media than television, and an interest in film as art.

Discrimination in the textbook

Neither *The media: ways and meanings* (1990) nor the subsequent editions of *Media: new ways and meanings* (1997, 2007) participate in the discrimination discourse in any clearly visible way. Indeed, the first edition excluded film from study altogether. At the time of writing each edition up until the most recent, it never occurred to me to include anything along these lines.

Demystification

During the 1980s and early 1990s, the British media education academic Len Masterman (1985, 6) argued that media education was a particularly urgent imperative because of the ideological importance of the modern media as symbolic signification systems – something which "flies in the face of many people's common-sense understanding of the media as largely unproblematic purveyors of experience" (Masterman 1985, 6). Students needed to be taught how to critically and actively read the media, as a means of counterbalancing the enormous power of the media to project "things as natural and authentic … simply part of the way things are" (Masterman 1985, 6). Writing at the time of the Falklands War, Masterman took on Barthes' notion of 'myth' to argue that the ideological power of the media was "not merely of academic, pedagogical or theoretical interest", but could also involve "quite literally matters of life and death" (Masterman 1985, 6).

With this sense of purpose, and taking up some of the critical pedagogy of the Brazilian 'liberation' educator Paulo Freire, Masterman called for a media pedagogy that would "liberate rather than oppress or domesticate" (Masterman 1985, 31). Through semiotic analysis and counteractive practical production work, the apparent naturalism of the media would be demystified and its constructed nature revealed. The central questions were about what power relationships were involved in the creation of media products, and whose interests were being served by their dissemination. These questions ultimately led to the foundation of what former Australian, now U.S. media educator David Considine (2002, 10) argues is the single most important concept in all Western media education: "the principle of 'non-transparency'. Media products are seen not as windows on the world or reflections of reality, but as constructions" (Considine 2002, 10).

Demystification in the textbook

The demystification discourses appear to some extent in the first edition of my textbook *Media: ways and meanings* (1990). Writing began on the book at around the same time as Masterman was publishing *Teaching the Media* (1985). Demystification style activities mostly appear in the sections on television news. In particular, the work of the Glasgow University Media Group is cited in sections on bias in television news in the first edition (Stewart 1990, 61-63) and the section on representation in

news, current affairs and documentaries in the second edition (Stewart & Kowaltzke 1997, 84-86). The material appears mostly unchanged in the section on representation in the news in the third edition (Stewart & Kowaltzke 2008, 49-53). The same material is included in the UK edition (Stewart, Lavelle & Kowaltzke 2001, 267-269). Cartoons from the Glasgow Group's books, *Bad News* (Glasgow University Media Group 1976) and *Really Bad News* (Philo & Glasgow University Media Group 1982) are also used in each edition. In the Australian editions, there is an extended news selection and editing simulation exercise based around a story on Ian Cohen – an anti-nuclear protester who surfed the bow wave of the USS Oldendorf as it entered Sydney Harbour in 1986. Students are asked to re-edit the news story to challenge the dominant discourse. This activity is also included in the second edition of *Media: new ways and meanings* (1997) and the demystification discourses are extended somewhat with a chapter on media codes and conventions.

Participation discourses

It is to Henry Jenkins that the participation discourse probably owes its name. Jenkins argues that the media culture today is much more participatory than it has ever been in the past. Before the arrival of digital media, opportunities for participation may have existed in an elementary form in certain fan cultures (for instance 'sweding' – as depicted in the 2008 Michael Gondry film *Be Kind Rewind* 1), but participation has now moved in from the fringes to become a more mainstream activity through re-mixes, blogs, citizen journalism, social networking and video sharing (Jenkins 2006 5, 135-142). According to Jenkins (2007, 3), a participatory media culture has the following characteristics: low barriers to artistic and civic engagement; opportunities for sharing creative products and becoming media makers; informal mentoring or peer tutoring that ensures a flow of knowledge from the most competent to the least competent.

There are several key benefits of a participatory culture, according to Jenkins, and these include peer led skills development, a diversified cultural expression, and a stronger sense of shared citizenship (Jenkins 2007, 3). The notion of increased participation leading to a greater sense of citizenship is also shared by Benkler, who sees an opportunity to return to non-market based interactions in an expanded public sphere (Benkler 2006).

Participation discourses in the textbook

Media: new ways and meanings (third edition) makes a deliberate pitch to the participation discourse – at least in its stated intent. Involvement in the discourse begins with the book design, created by my co-author Adam Kowaltzke. Following is his explanation of the design concept, emailed to me while we were still trialing different designs:

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[1] Sweding is the term given in the film to the process of faithful reproduction, for example, of a film or television program as an act of homage (rather than as plagiarism).

The book design is based on pixels. The media are transitioning to a fully digital form delivered entirely on screens that reproduce media content through millions of pixels in millions of colours. Media are also transitioning to a model in which user-generated content becomes a key aspect. New media especially encourage participation. This idea is illustrated on the cover by the bright, new pixels emerging underneath the greyer pixels above which represent the stale and dusty façade of old media (Kowaltzke 2007).

The preface of the book also draws attention to the participation discourse, arguing that the second edition, published in 1997, was written just as "the internet came to prominence as a new medium of communication".

> The second edition, published in 1997 was the first secondary media studies book to include digital media. As a media education lecturer during this time I found that trainees and experienced teachers found the text very easy to use with students and with rich examples from the media to engage students as well as a plethora of excellent activities (Burton 2008).

With approximately fifteen per cent of the text in the second edition devoted to the internet, multimedia and video games, "it was the first high-school media studies text to take account of the digital media" (Stewart & Kowaltzke 2008, vii). In the third edition, the percentage of the text devoted to 'new media' had moved to twenty-two per cent, and in the preface the key change mentioned is the movement towards student participation in the media as a goal of media education.

At the time of writing the third edition, during 2007, the most profound change was the huge movement towards citizen involvement in media creation and distribution. … The growth of video sharing and social networking sites allowed for more democratic distribution of media texts. The proliferation of relatively inexpensive cameras and editing programs gave everyone the ability to become a media producer (Stewart & Kowaltzke 2008, vii).

In all three Australian editions of the text (and in the UK edition as well), the primary focus is on genre. The motivation behind this lies essentially within participation discourses. In an Australian context, one of the most influential proponents of the explicit teaching of genre has been Gunther Kress. He makes explicit that the many ways in which society is now mediated rest upon exposure to genre; mastery of at least some of its forms is increasingly central to both life and work. Kress argues that the aim of making genres explicit to students is to allow more equal and fairer access to the benefits that their mastery bestows (Kress 1993 28).Teacher responses to the online surveys indicated a growing awareness of many of the key concerns within the participation discourses. This in turn influenced the content of the third edition of the book.

Changing definitions of textbooks

There is no single fixed definition of the term 'textbook' that covers in one swoop the multitude of books that are used in classrooms. Definitions of textbooks from the mid-twentieth century are suggestive of a highly-structured curriculum with a clear built-in

pedagogy. In 1955, McMurray and Cronbach defined textbooks as "arranged as a course of study, so that chapters would be studied in sequence, later ones presuming an understanding of earlier ones" (cited in Marsden 2001, 8). Buckingham (1960) defined textbooks as publications "carefully prepared by experts, placed in the hands of the learner and providing a means of supplying indirect experience in large and well-organised amounts" (cited in Marsden 2001, 8).

Later definitions, in line with post-modernist approaches, appear much more likely to acknowledge that textbooks are highly-situated cultural artefacts. Stray defines textbooks as "authoritative pedagogic versions of an area of knowledge" (Stray 1994, 2). Choppin states that the textbook is "... a repository of educational content ..." that is socially agreed to be "... the minimal requirement of a particular subject at a particular time" (Choppin 1992, 345).

Contemporary times have created a new set of definitional problems for the term 'textbook', and *Media: new ways and meanings* provides an illustration. To some extent both component words – text and book – have become more fluid in their meaning. The third edition of *Media: New ways and meanings* is no longer just a book, but has become a multimedia package. In the first print run of the third edition, the printed book is supplemented by a CD with a multimedia interface, allowing teachers to choose filmed examples, PowerPoint summaries, additional chapters and a reference list. In later print runs this interface is presented online with a teacher log-in. Adding to the blurring of nomenclature, many teachers do not buy the print copy of the book, but purchase the rights to an 'eBook' – a PDF version of the text that can be printed at the school, or used on screen. In a further dissipation of the traditional book component, some teachers appear to be customising this eBook by incorporating relevant chapters into their own school-specific online resource spaces. LaSpina claims that in the current era we are experiencing "an in-between cultural and pedagogical moment ... as we transition from printer's ink to pixels, or pixels into print ... the medium of the textbook is folded as it were into the medium of the screen" (LaSpina 1998, xiv).

The contemporary digital age has also wrought other changes. The status of the written word – the text in textbook – has also diminished somewhat as increasing emphasis is given to visual communication within the book itself. Like most textbooks, *Media: new ways and meanings* is multimodal, with the visual material providing a significant pedagogic pathway. According to Horsley and Lambert, this move towards the visual has been a consistent trend for textbooks, which have "evolved to the point where text (by which is meant extended prose) has disappeared" (Horsley & Lambert 2001, 37). Horsley and Lambert argue that this has happened in part because, rather than being focused on explanations, textbooks are now used as "pedagogical devices to help readers generate meaning, often mediated by the teacher" (Horsley & Lambert 2001, 37) .

Textbooks as versions of subject knowledge

Stray's definition of textbooks as "authoritative pedagogic versions of an area of knowledge" seems to fit with many of those who made explicit comments. Several teachers indicated they needed a textbook to make sense of the vast array of

material that was available on the internet, but which seemed unsorted and not reflective of any particular 'pedagogic content knowledge'.

> Although a wealth of information can be sourced online, it is not aimed at teaching or how to stimulate in the classroom environment (Queensland internet survey respondent).

Others mentioned the difficulty of finding material anywhere else but in a textbook. The areas of study the teachers were searching for are, in my teaching experience, relatively widely studied in media studies courses, but the topics are not so prominent outside the 'boundaries' of media studies as a subject. That is to say, they can't be easily 'googled' by busy teachers.

> Because it is often hard to access appropriate websites, it would be useful to have a textbook that goes into the historical development of anime and why there are particular themes within the popular texts: even different national styles of animation – I did a comparison of a Disney and a Japanese animation, but I found it quite hard to get differences between them (Victorian focus group respondent).

> Foreign film styles and their history, history of Hollywood and the influence it had on the world's cinema ... examples of treatments and synopses of short films – it is difficult to find good ones on the net (Queensland internet survey respondent).

> Foreign cinema and the historical periods, prominent directors and influences (social historical and cultural). I can find scraps here and there but nothing comprehensive enough for students to work through independently (Queensland internet survey respondent).

Another recurring theme from respondents was the amount of time it took them to find material for their classes and their desire for a textbook that would do their preparation for them. Words suggestive of the hard work involved in the task – such as 'trawling' – were a feature of these responses.

> I am introducing sound for moving pictures as a unit and have had to trawl through the internet for information that would be useful. So a chapter on that would be useful (Queensland internet survey respondent).

> Good case studies are lacking. I spent hours and hours this year looking up sources and providing students with information on different areas where the media is said to have had an influence. There are a number of articles online but many are not very objective (Victorian respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

> I can find material on most areas, but it requires extensive research. Sometimes I long to be a maths teacher (Queensland internet survey respondent).

These comments indicate that an important goal for the textbook *Media: new ways and meanings is* to mark out the appropriate pedagogic content knowledge for the subject and to separate or delineate subject content knowledge from the wealth of material that is available from other sources.

> [*Media: new ways and meanings*] ... is really its own version of media studies that draws on disparate disciplines and disparate bodies of knowledge and says this is one way to do it. The book is informed by a broad range of influences that probably reflects your experience as a Queensland media teacher (Michael Dezuanni – key informant interview).

Speaking specifically of school science subject knowledge, Kaloudis and Tsatsaroni (1996, 55) make the point that science textbooks are not "merely related to, but are the embodiment of, school science". Media studies textbooks may well operate in a more diluted relationship to the subject understandings students gain in classrooms than science textbooks. However, the sense that the textbook becomes the embodiment of subject knowledge still appears to be partly borne out by the comments of teachers.

> Textbooks are part of the subject discourse. They help to shape the discourses and reflect whatever is in the discourses of the time. The choice of textbook is crucial because some texts can be supporting a discourse that is no longer within a current teaching practice (Michael Dezuanni – key informant interview).

Textbooks also represent a version of pedagogy for the subject. For many teachers starting out, or those whose main teaching areas are in other subjects, it is quite possible that a textbook represents 'approved' pedagogy. Milne (2008) makes the same point: "A chosen textbook can also allow teachers to do what they are already doing, and because of its embedded pedagogy and authority, reduce the need for teachers to consult the syllabus" (Milne 2008, 9).

> In Victoria, where there is an exam and a relatively structured curriculum, the power of this effect is suggested in email responses to the Victorian media teachers' list. For instance, one list member indicates that in her teaching she does not want "to stray too far from the text as I don't want to fall away from the curriculum" (K.M. contributor to Victorian email list).

The descriptive surveys sent out to teachers as part of the writing process for the third edition were not the only surveys to have been conducted. As part of the writing process for each previous edition a descriptive survey was sent out to a sample of teachers in several states. One survey was sent out before the manuscript for the first edition manuscript was accepted by the publishers (in late 1988). Another was sent out just prior to the writing of the second edition in early 1996. Looking back over responses to these earlier descriptive surveys, it is possible to discern a change in the expectations of teachers. Responses from the 1980s and 1990s praise the focus on student activities.

> I found the exercises and activities much more useful than the information part of the text (Queensland English teacher – respondent to the 1988 descriptive survey).

> The activities are directly relevant to the information presented. They are realistic, specific and directive, offering a variety of learning opportunities and outcomes. The 'major assignments' offer students scope to explore and apply their understandings of the concepts and information introduced in the main body of the chapters (Victorian Media teacher – respondent to the 1996 descriptive survey).

The later responses to the descriptive surveys sent out for the third edition seem to regard the activities as less than fundamental to the book's purposes.

> I will sometimes read them for inspiration, but I don't use them (New South Wales Media and Performance (VET Cert II course) teacher – respondent to the third edition descriptive survey).

> I rarely use the suggested activities. Rather I use those sections of the book that support the tasks that I set my students. In a revised edition, I would probably have less rather than more activities (West Australian Media Production and Analysis teacher – respondent to the third edition descriptive survey).

The later responses suggest that the book is fulfilling a slightly different purpose for teachers than it did in earlier decades. The West Australian teacher's comments suggest that the recontextualising of knowledge may have become more important as the knowledge base has become more complex. This could possibly be due to the increased focus on key media concepts in state syllabus documents since the mid-1990s, and therefore the greater need for appropriate content in the textbook. The increased influence of Cultural Studies approaches in both media studies and English courses in the key Australian states could also be a factor. The focus on outcomes in Victorian and West Australian syllabus documents may also have contributed to this shift. Teachers are required to lead their students to meet the outcomes, but are able to do so using their own constructions of the learning process. It may be that this approach strengthens the role of the teacher as a facilitator of student learning, and collaterally strengthens the role of the textbook as a respected version of subject knowledge.

Textbooks as a course of study

Some teachers also favoured McMurray and Cronbach's mid-twentieth century definition of textbooks as books arranged "as a course of study, so that chapters would be studied in sequence, later ones presuming an understanding of earlier ones" (Marsden 2001, 8). However, there were also clear state differences in the expectations of teachers. Teachers in the state of Victoria, where the curriculum is more structured and where there is an external exam, clearly favoured the traditional role of textbooks. Teachers in the state of Queensland, where there is continuous

school-based assessment and no external exams, did not indicate any particular preference for textbooks as a highly structured course of study.
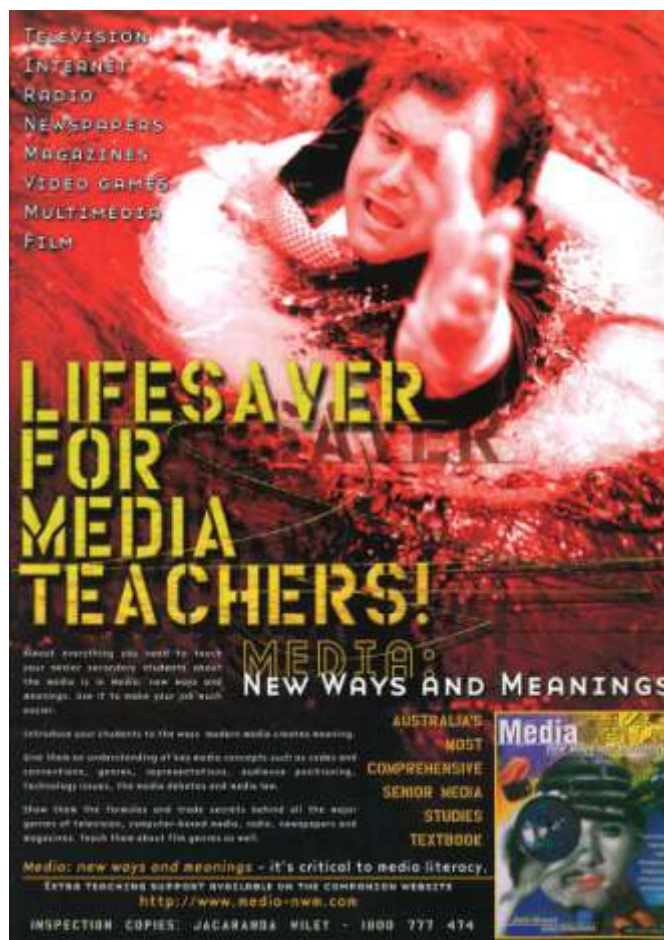

Figure 3: *Advertisement for the second (1997) edition of Media: new ways and meanings plays off the idea that the textbook can be quickly picked up as a resource of individual lesson ideas. The research conducted for this paper suggests that contemporary teachers are beginning to demand fewer activities and more content, moving the textbook closer to the idea of representing a course of study.*

Victorian teachers demanded that any media studies textbook they would want to use should follow the set units of study in the Victorian Media 'study design' (state syllabus / curriculum document). There was a clear preference for chapter headings that were the same as the unit titles in the study design/syllabus. It was also implicit in the replies of many respondents that the exams were a significant driver of course content.

> The [second edition] chapter sub-headings don't cover all of our course requirements for narrative. We have mandated things we have to cover and the exam questions come year after year, so driven by it all … (Victorian focus group respondent).

> I would like to see the order and sequence of the material improved and then have tasks tailored to the set curriculum. My teaching time is so precious as it is I simply do not have time to diverge from my course structure (Victorian respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

Queensland teachers are free to devise their own units as long as they relate to the key areas of study outlined in the Film, Television and New Media syllabus. Teachers in Queensland therefore demand a book with a wide variety of media studies topics and a structure that allows them to 'jump about' in the book depending on their own interests and those of their students. The lack of an external exam means that there is no need for a common set of units studied across the state.

> I don't think the book needs to conform to a specific course. The book's use of the 'key concepts' of media education means that it is adaptable to a number of media education courses (Queensland respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

> Although there was only one respondent from the state of Western Australia, he indicated an approach that reflected Stray's definition (authoritative versions of subject knowledge) rather than that of McMurray and Cronbach (textbooks as a course of study).

> *Media: new ways and meanings* [second edition] is a very useful text that we 'dip' in and out of, depending upon what unit we are teaching (West Australian respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

Teachers' responses suggested that to succeed as a national text, *Media: new ways and meanings* (third edition) would have to try to meet both definitions of a textbook. Hence my approach to the contents pages was to show a complete sequential course of Media for Victorian teachers, as well as a range of other topics for teachers in other states (and for Victorian teachers who wish to extend students in different directions).

Textbooks as multimedia packages

Only teachers in the focus group and those responding to the descriptive questionnaire were asked about the visual material or the design and layout of the text. The responses suggest that teachers expect visual material in a text and regard it as essential to maintaining student interest. However, their comments suggest that there is an ill-defined balance to be found between text and visuals, and some texts have exceeded it.

> Maybe I could start with two textbooks I use quite a lot – one has lots of text and not enough pictures, whereas the other textbook is light on content and has too many pictures. Something in-between that would be great (Victorian focus group respondent).

It seems obvious that teachers of media would want their textbooks to contain lots of images. Those who commented on the layout stressed the appeal of illustrations to students, but were also concerned about the shelf life of such images.

> The two-column style allows for the inclusion of lots of pictures, which is important for a book about media. Of course, many of the photos are starting

> to look dated, but that is to be expected with a book about media (Queensland respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

Many teachers saw the potential of accompanying digital media (such as a website or DVD/CD) to provide additional images and to overcome the problem of dated examples. When asked about what they would like to see, most respondents listed more images and video examples of material discussed in the text.

> I would love to see video examples of the examples in the book. For example, if you are using a script of an ad, it would be great to be able to show students how that ad ended up looking and sounding on radio (NSW respondent to the descriptive questionnaire).

> What would be a real bonus might be a DVD resource that has a primer to basics of visual literacy and perhaps some excerpts and such that could be 'case in point' demonstrations of aspects of the book – for example sequences from films mentioned that illuminate a point or stills that support aspects of the text and that could be projected using a data projector for greater impact than B&W photocopies (Queensland internet survey respondent).

A complementary CD was created to accompany the textbook and the feedback from respondents was used to determine the content. A major component of the content was examples from films to illustrate the material on language production elements. Copyright costs meant that Hollywood examples could not be used and so examples were sourced from Victorian and Queensland independent filmmakers. A list of key film language production elements was drawn up from the material in the textbook chapter and was sent to the filmmakers, who indicated whether or not they had any footage that was suitable. The film material was added to a range of other content such as a bibliography of reading and some unpublished additional chapters. In later print runs of the third edition of the textbook, the material on the CD was moved to a password protected website.

Conclusion

Kuhn (1996), with his notion of paradigm shift proposes that when there is a change of paradigm, the proponents of the old paradigm lose their authority and their influence fades away – a particularly poignant observation for me (a Baby Boomer) as 'Generation Y' take up their positions in the teaching profession.

> When an individual or group first produces a synthesis able to attract most of the next generation's practitioners, the older schools gradually disappear (Kuhn 1996, 18).

> … older views … are simply read out of the profession and their work is subsequently ignored. If they do not accommodate their work to the new paradigm, they are doomed to isolation ... (Kuhn 1996, 19).

The textbook *Media: new ways and meanings*, in its three Australian editions and one UK edition, spans the time period of several paradigm shifts in media education.

The first edition, *The media: ways and meanings*, partly belongs to the original paradigm of media teaching – protectionism. However, since it was written on the cusp of the change to the ideologically focused demystification discourses, and because I was, in any case, relatively unschooled in the demystification discourses of media teaching coming out of the UK at the time, it may instead have (unconsciously) presaged an awakening interest in genre amongst educators. Therefore it also contained aspects of the participation discourse that was to follow.

However, the second edition (and the associated UK edition) makes a tentative and again, relatively un-theorised foray into the beginning of the participation discourse or paradigm. The following review of the UK book Media and Meaning, published in 2001, indicates that it is still at that time the only one to focus on both genre and new media.

> Effectively combining the essayist's infectious interest in developing a line of thought with the apparatus of a text that provides material for classroom work is a challenge for media-studies textbooks in the key concepts genre. Colin Stewart, Marc Lavelle and Adam Kowaltzke set about this challenge differently – by medium rather than concept. […] This is a reassuring structure for a big and sometimes sprawling book. What holds it together is partly the way in which the key concepts are revisited in considering each medium but also the way the authors focus on content types or genres as the basis for their most interesting discussions. This is the only textbook to foreground computer-based media, and the only one where the authors fully discuss the content types and audience relationships that are emerging in the digital realm (Fleming 2002).

By the third edition it became clear the book would need to explicitly accommodate the new participation paradigm or risk, in Kuhn's words, being "simply read out of the profession" (Kuhn 1996, 19). Accordingly, the preface to the third edition concludes:

> Taking account of these new developments, in *Media: new ways and meanings* third edition we have set ourselves the goal of supporting teachers in developing a diversified critical literacy that encourages students to access, analyse and create media in new and participatory ways (Stewart & Kowaltzke 2008, vii).

Accommodating to the new paradigm or discourses in the third edition was somewhat easier than expected, again due to aspects of the book that were perceived as problems under different circumstances. The 'sprawling' nature of the book in its second and UK editions, referred to in the Times Higher Education Supplement review, meant that it was wide-ranging enough to encompass a different paradigm by the time of the third edition.

> In a lot of ways, I think *Media: new ways and meanings*, and the new Victorian books reflect the eclectic nature of media ed. I think they fit with the participation discourse because they aim to get students involved with media in a reflective way – I think they also draw heavily on Cultural Studies (Dezuanni 2007).

It is even more difficult for me to see the arrival of any new paradigm now because I have just expended so much effort in completing the third edition of the book, this time rather more consciously cementing its placement within the participation discourses. Perhaps it is the common experience of the later career educator, having survived various conceptual shifts, to want to understand both where things have come from, and there they might be headed. With so much of my life tied up in *Media: new ways and meanings*, the question that dogs me is, "Was it all worth it?"

> ... all those marks made on all that paper ... all that and nothing remaining of the poor hand that traced them, of the anxiety that sought appeasement in them, of that completed life that has nothing but them to survive in? (Foucault 1972, 210).

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