

EDITORIAL

DIANA BOSSIO AND BLAISE MURPHET

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY AND UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

It is with great pleasure that we welcome you to the first Special Edition of *PLATFORM: Journal of Media and Communication*. This edition begins what we hope to be a long-standing collaboration with the Australian and New Zealand Communications Association (ANZCA), and it provides a fantastic opportunity to highlight some of the best work from graduate scholars in media and communication. ANZCA is a professional association for researchers and professionals working in the broad field of media and communications. This ANZCA Special Edition showcases some fascinating findings and discussions around media theory and also engages with specific elements of communications practice.

There is a silent current in Australia that is slowly gathering momentum, but needs support to gather force. It is the ever-growing tide of post-graduate students beginning research in media and communications disciplines. However, in a sea of more than 48,000 postgraduate research students in Australia, it can be difficult to find a supportive network of peers in a particular discipline. One of *PLATFORM's* key aims is to provide a space where graduate students can ask questions, initiate debates, and interact with some of the key concepts of media and communications theory. Similarly, ANZCA has recognised that completing post-graduate research can be a daunting, and quite solitary, experience. The organisation sought to provide an opportunity for students to talk, not just about their research, but also about their experiences as a postgraduate in a forum of their peers and mentors.

With generous financial support from the ARC-funded Cultural Research Network and the ANZCA executive, five post-graduate workshops were held across Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. The most extensive workshop was held at Queensland University of Technology in July 2009 as a pre-conference ANZCA event. Selected post-graduates were given an opportunity to present their research to eminent media and communications scholars, including Professor Gerard Goggin, Professor John Hartley and Professor Gay Hawkins, amongst others. The workshop was very successful, provoking lively debate and invaluable support to postgraduates at various stages of their candidature. There was an overwhelming response from students who wanted information about successfully completing their candidature, and a supportive and encouraging environment to talk about their research. The only complaint was that there wasn't another workshop planned with more time for conversation! What this points to is a lively post-graduate community, filled with enthusiastic scholars creating innovative approaches to media and communications research.

From the plethora of talented individuals who presented at the workshops, we are thrilled to present five of the students' research in this very special edition. These five postgraduates were chosen by their peers to reflect the variety of interesting research currently occurring within the media and communications field. Among the contributors, Deb Wall explores issues of indigenous access and opportunity in her case study of the Western Australian government's consultations with indigenous communities regarding the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Development at James Price Point in the Kimberley. Wall argues that the ways in which indigenous communities are represented in governmental consultation takes on complexity because their own communications and governance systems must be articulated in the process of consultation.

Susan Bandias explores indigenous access and opportunity from a different perspective: uses of information communication technology. Bandias's case study examines the role of information communication technology in creating social inclusion and access for indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. The case study illustrates Bandias' argument that the gaps between technology, social capital and indigenous community and social needs have not been well researched and makes an innovative contribution to the debate about how information communication technologies might create social capital divisions. Orit Ben-Harush's article continues on the theme on the effect of information communications technology on social capital, but makes a fascinating discovery. Her case study of contemporary networks of adult females in an Australian sea change community found that the mobile phone was the least used method of communication amongst friends. Ben-Harush's case study illustrates that current Australian mobile phone policy does not actually meet the social and communication needs of women in regional areas.

The last two contributions make quite varied but topical contributions to media and communications theories, illustrating the innovative research postgraduate students are conducting into traditional thinking in the discipline. Geoffrey Berry's research is a unique take on traditional media theory. His article compares influential critiques of mass media from such varied theorist as McLuhan, to Adorno to Baudrillard and compares the mythic element situated within each theorisation. Taking a modern reading of Plato as his guide, Berry argues that communications systems falsely maintain a paradigm of truth or reality. Emma Tom takes on the world of cheerleading, suggesting the form occupies a vastly provocative cultural status, provoking popular derision, feminist anxiety and sexualised interest. Unfortunately this division, Tom argues, leaves the young women associated with cheerleading without allies in the cultural debate.

These papers demonstrate the vibrant and exciting future of media and communications research in Australia. More importantly, they demonstrate the need and importance of a community to support and foster these innovative contributions to the field. ANZCA provides this support through its community of scholars and culture of research activity, whilst *PLATFORM* provides support by giving graduate students the chance to contribute their voice to a global discussion on media and communications. We hope that this edition illustrates the important role of graduate research in the media field. We would encourage all post-graduates to seek membership and to present at the annual ANZCA conferences, attend one of the many post-graduate workshops, and to make your voice heard by contributing to *PLATFORM* in the future.

Guest Editor Diana Bossio would like to acknowledge the assistance of the current ANZCA post-graduate representative, Lucy Morieson, who made mammoth tasks more manageable - and a lot more fun! She would also like to thank Gerard Goggin, Terry Flew and John Tebutt for their assistance, and the ANZCA executive for their unwavering support of post-graduate endeavour.

Furthermore, this edition would not have been possible without the wonderful work of our copy editors Marie Christodulaki and Dale Leorke, our peer reviewers and the support of the entire *PLATFORM* editorial team.