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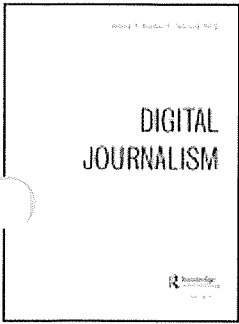
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Digital Broadcasting: an introduction to new media

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Digital Broadcasting: an introduction to new media

Jo Pierson and Joke Bauwens (Eds.)

New York: Bloomsbury, 2015

176 pp., £45 (hbk), ISBN 9781847887412

In *Digital Broadcasting*, Jo Pierson and Joke Bauwens have established a middle ground for academics and practitioners to negotiate their perspectives of converging media, each with equal merit. This book provides a comprehensive overview that is neither too academic nor overly restrictive to professional practices. It adds strength to existing research, while embracing the introspection required as traditional broadcasting practitioners find their place in the converging ecosystem. Approaching this book as both an academic and a television producer, I found the clear and concise text captures the present state of broadcasting.

The strength of *Digital Broadcasting* is in this clarity and its dialog between academic and practitioner voices making sense of change. It addresses fundamental concepts, such as "liveness" (p. 75), noting how it has maintained value in the media environment and in cross-platform integration. Though it would have been interesting to delve into the reasons why audiences expect traditional media to maintain the allure of being "live" while developing *à la carte* programming platforms, Pierson and Bauwens open up these areas for future discussion.

This book draws into focus the way convergence and digital broadcasting are becoming less areas of a public trust, and more seen as economic hurdles for media corporations to clear. Jeanette Steemers (in Artz and Kamalipour 2007) foresaw the complicated transition in Europe over digital broadcasting when she outlined the digital diffusion across borders as a genie leaving its bottle, where once released it is difficult to ignore the wishes of technological oligarchies and their influence on broadcasters.

Where it might miss its targets is in the authors' efforts to discuss broadcasting globally, where national nuances are overlooked and common knowledge assumed. In the discussion of broadcasting policies, for instance, Pierson and Bauwens reference the Television Without Frontiers Directive (p. 22), with a European Union focus. For non-European readers, the important discussions behind such initiatives risk being dismissed as irrelevant. Similarly, when discussing aggregation, the authors skate over specifics such as Disney owning both the ESPN and ABC networks and how, like many media oligarchies, Disney has created a digital world of separate but dependent members. While these are nationally specific cases, the absence of explanatory details weakens the overall discussions.

This book works best when it addresses the audience as if they are undergraduate students wanting to understand the present state of media, or practitioners wanting to access the current state of their field, and the authors encourage this accessibility with numerous "reflection" points, chapter summaries, and case studies.

Unfortunately, Pierson and Bauwens stumble when presenting a "generic value network" figure and definition (p. 35). It is a confusing labyrinth and overcooked flow

chart that takes away from the clarity of the rest of the text. One has to wonder who is the audience of this text at this point? This question returns when the authors claim: "We have arrived at a period where technological digitization and convergence are starting to reach maturity" (p. 24). It seems to be a premature pontification as technological determinism, and modernity, may prevent technology from reaching maturity.

Practitioners differ from academics in estimating how the sway of modernity and new technology drive clients, audiences, and profits. Researchers including Pavlik argue that while technology can stand alone, implementation determines its application and adoption (Pavlik 2001, 111–121). Napoli, similarly, looks at adoption in describing audience adoption as the "long tail" of mass consumption (Napoli 2001, 57–67). Technology, argues Rivero (2015), is created by science but implemented by human endeavor or desire and, around this, power, influence, acceptance, and reach are all aggravated by culture and modernity. With all of these forces at play, it seems unlikely a point of maturity will soon be settled.

While the book is a good overview of the state of broadcasting, it would benefit from a more fulsome discussion of business implications. The authors mention business models and value networks, noting, "the main strategic challenge is to reconfigure roles and relationships among this constellation of actors to improve the fit between a firm's competencies and the customers' needs" (p. 33). Pierson and Bauwens recite Jenkins' (2006) exploration of "how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets and reinforce viewer commitments". This line of thinking leads to pertinent questions by Pierson and Bauwens:

Are the changes we witness symptomatic of more fundamental ruptures in the sphere of production, or, if anything, are they to be considered as merely intensifications of the process of the industrialization, commercialization, and commodification of broadcasting? (p. 52)

Regardless of the readers' background or nationality, these questions are relevant to all systems of media. While there are no simple answers, these quandaries should fuel readers to reflect on the difference between theory and practice in digital broadcasting. There is a sense they have an excellent grasp of the present environment and future potentials of convergence in both theory and practice.

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