

**Godfrey, D. G., & Brinson, S. L. (eds.):
Routledge reader on Electronic Media History. New York:
Routledge. 2015**

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The study of electronic media has come a long way. Today we have news on demand, and the field of broadcasting and journalism is fast expanding; whether this expansion is positive or negative is another debate entirely.

To fully understand the ever-expanding electronic media industry the world over, it is imperative that scholars of mass communication fully understand the history of the media. Electronic Media History today has become one of the most important aspects in the study of communication, popular culture, new media, radio and television.

The book titled *Routledge Reader on Electronic Media History* is trying to contribute to the discussion on the history of electronic media by compiling essays from prominent and relevant authors. This collection of essays shows the growth and development of research into electronic media from inception to the current day.

It is clear that the editors carefully and methodically selected the most relevant articles on the subject matter. The first thing one would notice on perusing the book is that the book is a compilation of landmark research into the field.

In the introductory chapter of the book, Don Godfrey, Professor Emeritus at Arizona State University, and Susan Brinson, Professor at Auburn University, state that they have made an attempt to present relevant articles and in a manner as straight forward as possible without necessarily editing them. We can therefore deduce that the authors opted for an analytical approach to the study of electronic media history. Their approach to this study is interesting and makes for an easy read, as the authors have presented and

examined mostly widely accepted scholarship on the topic without commenting this; this ensures that the information received is not ambiguous or confusing to the reader.

Perhaps one thing that might put off some readers about the book is the fact that the authors understandably omitted a large number of works by prominent authors and researchers. This might have a slightly negative impact on the book's credibility as a go-to-medium for relevant research into electronic media history. However, the authors remedied this problem by including a near-exhaustive list of authors in their 'suggestions for further readings' section. This might not assuage the anger or doubt in the readers, but at the very least it tells us that the authors are aware of these scholarships but after much thought decided against publishing full-length articles from them. In my opinion, this does not in any way reduce the validity or relevance of this book. No book can include exhaustive full-length publication of all relevant articles and research, as the field of mass communication is rapidly growing, and every day new thoughts and ideas are translated into articles and books. One can only hope that the authors consider a revised edition that would include more contemporary and relevant articles that might have been omitted in this edition.

The book is structured into eight major parts that progress logically from the general to the more specific aspects of media history. At the beginning of each section, the authors state briefly the importance of the section, the materials included in that part of the book as well as suggested additional readings. This part helps set the tone for the section and allows the readers a brief peek into what to expect in the section.

Part one of the book speaks about history in general. This part starts off with an article by Asa Briggs which examines social history and human experience. This is immediately followed by an article by Douglas Gomery titled 'Methods for the study of the History of Broadcasting and Mass Communication'. This effectively narrows the focus of the section from a broader history to a more specific history of media.

Part two of the book examines the years before on-demand media. This part discusses the monopoly enjoyed by media in the early days and how these media helped shaped audience identity. The selected articles show how documentaries and programming contributed to group identity.

Part three examines news and information programming, and focuses on how broadcasting is influencing politics. The section starts by examining the history of audience research and proceeds to discuss the news coverage of World War II. I would perhaps have preferred a more international approach to this section rather than a western-world centric approach. A large amount of good research is found from third world and Asian countries into how media are influencing politics, and I believe these would make for a good addition for this book.

Part four of this book shows the general lack of academic and research materials into educational and public broadcasting. Only three articles on this subject matter were

included, and even these three articles show a distinct lack of materials on this issue of educational and public broadcasting.

Part five of the book takes the reader on a historical trip round the world to examine and highlight the differences in international broadcasting.

Part six examines the laws and ethics guiding electronic media in the United States of America. This section of the book speaks about the history of allocation of a spectrum for radio broadcasting. The book then proceeds to discuss the changes to the first amendment brought about by broadcasting technologies and the North American government's attempt to regulate the industry.

Val Limburn's article speaks about the decline of ethics and is a fine way to end this section. It is clear that the authors struggled to compile so many articles and cover so many aspects of media ethics without looking clumsy.

Parts seven and eight examine the financial aspect of electronic media and how changing and improving technologies are affecting media in general. Part seven uses articles about the regulation of the cable and satellite industries in the US, while part eight includes articles that chronologically explain the development of the broadcast industries and the people involved in the innovation of these. Finally, it discusses the development of new media.

Generally speaking, the book is a fine collection of some of the most relevant and well-written research articles on electronic media history. The arrangement of the book, from the general history to more specific media history, is very well thought out and allows for easy understanding of the issues discussed. I wish, however, that the authors had included more articles from an African or Asian perspective. This book would make for a good read for both post-graduate students and researchers of mass communication as it includes a large number of relevant discussions on media history in one book which is easy to read and understand.

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