

## PREFACE

User participation in organizational activities has disrupted the existing status quo between hierarchies and individuals, not only from a governance point of view but also from a cultural production perspective. Within the media industries, participation has been most obvious through audience engagement, which has been one focus of social science scholarship in recent years—particularly the debates surrounding participatory and convergence cultures. While some scholars support the convergence of technologies, cultures and media production and consumption, others argue that audience participation is exploitative, non-professional, utopianistic and full of futurist rhetoric. This book interrogates the existing theories of convergence culture and audience engagement in the media and communication disciplines by providing grounded examples of social media use as a social mobilization tool within the media industries. In particular, this book is intended to provide an explicit overview of how one notable media organization, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), has incorporated participation into its production methodology while maintaining its role as a cultural infrastructure innovation institution. The ABC can perform this innovation by engaging its staff as cultural intermediaries; these can be the taste agents between the production and consumption of cultural goods, market agents that perform conduit roles between the producers and consumers of cultural goods or, as has been noted, the ‘third wave’ of cultural intermediaries—those who use cultural capital to improve our

social society. While the research of this book is located within one of Australia's public service broadcasters, its core arguments can be applied to other commercial and non-commercial media organizations globally.

The aim of this book is to update our understanding of convergence culture as a theoretical framework by exploring how it is being operationalized within media organization settings. How are users participating in collaborative content production? How are production methodologies incorporating user participation? How does user participation challenge existing regulatory frameworks? This book highlights not only the mechanics of user participation within organizations—for example, social media platforms and politics—but also the benefits and challenges that are experienced by both cultural goods producers and consumers. The challenges are many, including disruptive governance models, aligning knowledge and expertise between institutional stakeholders, and production and editorial calibration between those stakeholders. However, the benefits of collaborative social production include increased affect, gleaned from knowledge exchange and open democratic processes, increased social and cultural capital outcomes, and content production that is unique through its mediatization. This book draws on several years of ethnographic field data to demonstrate how the challenges and opportunities of cultural intermediation present themselves in the day-to-day operation of a major public service media production institution, contributing a unique perspective to the existing theories on convergence culture and audience participation.

This is the first publication of its kind to provide a compelling argument for cultural intermediation as a production, governance and social framework that is essential for media organizations engaging in co-creation activities. The challenges and opportunities afforded by co-creation within institutional media settings do not manage themselves, and if left unattended would detract from the purpose of those media organizations engaging with participatory cultures. Nor is such management accidental: It comprises the efforts of carefully managed processes designed by cultural intermediaries who facilitate co-creation within institutional online communities. The role of cultural intermediation has a structuring impact on how convergence culture is shaped and mobilized within media organizations, especially national cultural facilitators. The ABC is an ideal media organization to research, as it has a history of innovative production methodologies and service development for Australia's citizens. In the Australian context, broadcasting operates under a dual

licensing system, which provides space for both commercial and non-commercial media organizations. The ABC is often situated as a distinctive innovation media organization that develops new experimental thinking and production methodologies as exemplars for the media sector more broadly. The ABC was one of the first media organizations to realize the significance of community management as a role to facilitate the co-creation of cultural goods, which has since been acknowledged by the broader media sector. In this regard, the ABC provides an example of a media organization similar to the BBC, DR, PBS, NHK or other public service media organizations around the world. Public service media (PSM) is the focus of this research because it is a burgeoning field of scholarship, operates alongside the commercial media sector and has important implications for national media, cultural and social policy.

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Cultural Intermediaries

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